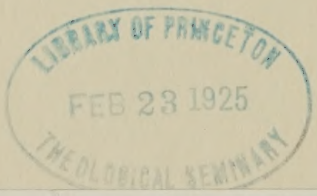
CHRISTIANITY—WHICH WAY?

CHARLES SPARROW NICKERSON



BV 600 .N42 1925
Nickerson, Charles Sparrow.
Christianity, which way?

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CHRISTIANITY
WHICH WAY?

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CHRISTIANITY WHICH WAY?

A HISTORICAL STUDY OF CHANGES AND ACHIEVEMENTS IN THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

BY

REV. CHARLES SPARROW NICKERSON, D.D.

And if it bear fruit, well. And if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.
Luke 13:9

THE CENTURY CO.
New York and London

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Dedicated to

LIBERTY OF CONSCIENCE, OF THOUGHT
AND OF SPEECH

in all matters of religion; in the belief that only as we claim this liberty for ourselves and grant it to others can we ever reach such clear convictions as our Master intended us to have

AND TO THE HONORED MEMORY OF

WILLIAM SPARROW

two hundred and sixty-ninth recorded victim of the persecutions under Queen Mary; who for his unswerving faith in Jesus Christ and his courageous testimony suffered death by fire in Smithfield, London, November 18, 1557

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THE CHURCH MILITANT

Ecclesiastical history is to a large extent the history of corruptions.

JOHN STOUGHTON.

The preliminary step to following Christ is to leave the dead to bury their dead.

ROBERT BROWNING.

Sit down before a fact as a little child. Be prepared to give up every preconceived notion. Follow humbly wherever and into whatever abysses nature leads, or you shall learn nothing.

HUXLEY, in a letter to Charles Kingsley.

All errors flow into human society from one source, namely the burial by men in oblivion of the life, the precepts and the lessons of Jesus Christ, and their neglecting to apply the same to the actions of every day.

POPE BENEDICT XV.

I have lived, sir, a long time. The longer I live the more convincing proofs I see that God governs in the affairs of men. And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without his notice, is it probable that an empire can arise without his aid?

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN, in moving that the meetings of the Constitutional Convention be opened with prayer.

The church did not attain maturity at the Nicene Council. Augustine was not the highest achievement of the Christian faith. The Protestant Reformation did not introduce the Golden Age. A church that is not growing in grace is a dead church. A theology that is not progressive is bed-ridden. The church needs a greater Reformation than it has yet enjoyed. The grace of God will reveal itself at no distant day in vastly greater richness and fulness, for the sanctification of the Christian church, the preparation of the Bride for her Bridegroom.

CHARLES AUGUSTUS BRIGGS.

CHRISTIANITY—WHICH WAY?

INTRODUCTORY

THE CHURCH MILITANT

SINCE the introduction of Christianity there have been many times when it could be said that a discussion of religious problems was of interest to nobody outside the active membership of churches. To understand why this is not the case at present, we must call attention to the fact that the Christian religion exists in three very distinct forms or manifestations. This faith arose centuries ago among a people who already had a religion. In those days every nation had its own religion. The worship of some kind of deity was as much a part of the common, daily life of the people as their patriotism or their sense of family relationship. The Roman, the pagan, the Hebrew, each accepted his traditional faith as he

accepted his race, his language, or his name. His religion not only bound his interests to an invisible world, but separated him from what he regarded as an inferior part of this world. Incidentally his religion inculcated some ideas and principles of behavior, but, except in the case of the Hebrews, these moral precepts were secondary. Even among the Hebrews they were not looked upon as really obligatory when dealing with strangers.

Into this world, and into the part of it that had this best of the racial traditions, there came a teacher with an entirely new idea of religion. To him it was not a matter of race or custom or language, but of pure love to God and good will to our fellow-men. We have certain duties of a special character to our own homes and people and nation, but these must never make us the enemy of the stranger because he is a stranger. This new prophet taught that God has made of one blood all who dwell upon the earth, and that God revealed himself specially to the Hebrew to make the Hebrew not the exploiter but the benefactor of all men. These principles are such commonplaces to us that it

is only by an effort we can realize with what puzzled incredulity they were received at first, even by the intimate friends of Jesus. The idea that we must not make war upon a stranger when we learn that his forefathers warred with ours centuries ago, upset all previous ideas of religious obligation. His god and ours were continually at war; how else could we please our god? To find such a stranger wounded and dying by the roadside and to nurse him back to life was to sin against our own people. It made the enemy stronger by one man, and wasted good wine and oil and twopence that might be used to fortify Samaria. That was patriotism and religion before Christ came into the world. It is yet, in some quarters.

It is not because of its moral superiority alone that we put Christianity among religions in a class entirely by itself. It stands alone, with no comparison in kind with any other faith. The first disciples went out to preach this faith not to people whose minds were a religious blank, for there were none of that kind anywhere, but to people who already had re-

ligions. This was the first of the three forms in which Christianity was preached. We may call it Apostolic Christianity, using the word with no reference to theological beliefs. Mankind was divided into just two parts, with reference to Christ, and the condition of this division was personal faith in him. There was nothing else to distract the attention. Those who had accepted Christ were in the church. They never thought of living a Christian life in any other way. Those who had never heard of Christ, or, having heard, had rejected or refused or had not yet decided, were not in the church nor connected with it in any capacity whatever. There was no middle ground, or possibility of confusing one's Christian relationship. This condition is found nowhere to-day except in foreign mission territory.

In course of time the Christian faith passed into another stage or form which we may call Imperialistic Christianity, from the fact that it is so closely associated with the Roman Empire. It reached out in the direction of a racial religion, so far as such a conception

could be reconciled with Christian teaching at all. Certain nations had adopted Christianity in the place of their own ancestral faiths. In such nations the church drifted into the old and familiar way of treating the entire citizenship as entitled to all religious privileges and immunities, whether they ever had made anything like a personal choice of Christ, as the Apostles had demanded, or not. We cannot enter here into a discussion of the theological bearings of this belief. We call attention only to the historical fact, that endured in all Christendom for more than a thousand years. An idea very much like this, though not quite the same, still holds in the larger part of Christendom.

At the Protestant Reformation in the sixteenth century the progressive part of Western Christendom broke away from Rome, but not from the racial church idea. The early Protestant churches were distinctly national. There was more or less of emphasis put upon personal religion and the definite consecration of the believer to Christ. But until the Puritan movement in the following century there was

no real effort to return to the Apostolic condition of making one's Christianity depend not upon his citizenship in a nominally Christian land and a mere formal instruction in accordance with such citizenship, but upon his definite choice of Christ and his profession of that faith. It was impossible, of course, for the seventeenth century to restore first-century conditions and the actual New Testament church. But the Puritan did succeed in drawing an Apostolic distinction between being a Christian and being a respectable member of society. This is the Puritan's real bequest to subsequent generations. With all the changes that have come in the past two centuries, and the obliterating of old landmarks, we here in America have kept this difference between Christian and near-Christian clearly in our minds. Even in those cases where people have cast off all the stricter ideas of religion that we associate with the word "Puritan," they still draw a clear line between the man who reverently holds to what he considers to be Christian truths, and the man who ridicules

or opposes Christianity, or claims to live in absolute independence of it.

Along with Protestantism and Puritanism there has come sectarianism, and the three together have built up what we may call Modern Christianity. This development of the faith, which holds the key of the future in its hands, has been profoundly influenced by its environment. It seems to be a law of nature that mixture of blood gives strength, and especially when combined with the natural sifting of emigrant peoples by the transfer to new surroundings of their most enterprising elements. All great nations have been to some extent composite, and have developed in almost every instance upon land that was not originally their own. Now the greatest nation of them all has arisen,—entirely immigrant and a score of times more composite than any other race that ever lived. At the very beginning of its career this nation was committed to two principles that have everything to do with the future of Christianity. It repudiated at once and completely the race idea of religion. The sepa-

ration of church and state, and liberty to worship God according to the dictates of conscience, are fundamental principles with us and never will be changed. And in the second place, largely by the circumstances of its early history, the moral characteristics of the American people have a distinct trend toward Puritanism, though the purely dogmatic features of this type of formal religion have been greatly changed. As an illustration we may mention our unprecedented experiment of controlling by a fundamental law of the whole land one of the oldest and greatest enemies of the human race, intemperance. We have our faults, but no complete estimate of the American character can be made that minimizes its strong substratum of moral conviction.

One very prominent feature of this phase of religion that we have called Modern, as distinct from Apostolic and Imperialistic Christianity, particularly noticeable here in America, is the constantly widening division between Christian life and church life. We are not preaching, as the Apostles did, to pagan people or to Hebrews who knew of God but

had no knowledge of Christian revelation. We are preaching to people who have been brought up in a civilization from which it would be as impossible to separate Christian ideas as it would be to put away geography, history, or natural science. Some of our hearers outside the church membership have better and higher ideas of Christian truths than many who are holding official positions in the church, and their manner of daily living is more respected by their neighbors. It is a delicate and peculiar situation, particularly noticeable in large city parishes and educational centers, but more or less in evidence everywhere. Very many of these people do not regard themselves as entirely separate from the Christian body, but for reasons that are mainly local and personal they are out of sympathy with church life of the kind they know. Some of them say, like Abraham Lincoln, that they are waiting for the church to bring its requirements for membership more into accord with the things that Christ demands for discipleship.

It would be most unjust to this unorganized and unregistered conviction to charge these

people with the attempt to evade a recognized duty, or to put forth a claim of intellectual superiority. Most of them frankly admit that their position is not consistent. They say they ought to be somewhere, but declare that they do not know where they belong. They are appealed to by dozens of denominational bodies, each claiming to have the only real gospel and to maintain the only right Christian practice. Unless one has a very strong sectarian bias he is apt to obtain from all this controversy nothing more definite than a general conviction that none of them is right. And conscientious people are finding it more and more repellent to all their best and noblest ideas of religion to think of deciding a matter of real importance by inherited bias or appeal to prejudice of any kind. A hundred years ago people could settle such questions by listening to the arguments pro and con—there were plenty of opportunities in those days—and making up their minds. Those were the days of individualism in religion, when every man of any brains at all flattered himself that he was something of a theologian. It is not the

case to-day. The modern intelligent hearer has come into a very different way of thinking. He has no confidence in sectarian disputation. He insists that no layman ought to be expected to decide questions that are outside his province and beyond the means of investigation possessed by any but specialists. He declares that it is the business of the church either to decide such matters in a rational manner if they are vital parts of religion, or if they are not vital parts of it the church should say so and put them entirely out of the way.

These are the real problems that face us to-day. We cannot escape them by saying that it is easy enough to find fault with the church, and by insisting that if there are superior people outside they should come in where they belong and thus help to raise the standard. Unquestionably the church is an essential institution, and needs the support of all the best elements in the community. Without the church of past centuries, we should be in heathenism still, as our ancestors were. Without the church of to-day, no intelligent student of sociology can question that our

boasted civilization would probably endure only long enough for science to invent still more deadly poisons and explosives. But at the same time there can be no doubt in the mind of any one who is in the midst of Christian work to-day with open eyes and ears that the church has laid itself open to criticism and deserves most of what it is getting. It is the accredited teacher of religion. It has had four hundred years of very dear bought liberty in which to find out what it believes. The old sectarian arguments led nowhere, they are leading nowhere to-day, and they never can bring light at any future time. Why are they kept up? Why must the most important work that man has ever undertaken in all his history be checked and hindered for all time by such utter childishness as the ordinary and familiar kinds of denominational controversy? And any one who is at all familiar with modern conditions knows that sectarianism, bad as it is, after all is not the only evil by which the modern church is deprived of the support and active help of a very large part of the actual Christianity surrounding it. Is it worth its

while for the modern church to ask what are the causes of this condition, or is it best to continue its historic policy of each one per cent in it claiming that it cannot be mistaken, and that all must come to its exact standard of belief or go unsaved?

Our purpose is to present a brief study of certain periods in church history that bear directly upon modern religious problems. We wish to show that the church in past days has been willing to introduce changes, sometimes of a revolutionary character, in order to fit itself for more effective presentation of the gospel in the conditions and circumstances of that particular time. What we wish to do in preaching the gospel to-day is to present our historic faith in such form and manner as will appeal to the modern intelligence and the modern conscience as compulsively as former upward movements in the church appealed to the intelligence and the conscience of their day. The church has never greatly advanced except by a rediscovery of what Christ's message to the world can mean. Such a rediscovery, greater than any previous one, is

provided for by the marvelous advance in scriptural study and interpretation made possible in recent years.

At the very beginning of our inquiry we must clear away certain misunderstandings that happen to be just now farther to the front than any real importance of their own would ordinarily warrant. Religion is naturally conservative, and when anything goes wrong many people jump to the conclusion that all our troubles come to us because we have drifted away from the safe foundations, and the thing to do is to restore the old faith. Assuming that anybody really knows what the old faith is, it would not be possible to restore it. If the present generation could be transferred magically back into the humanity of the seventeenth century, it is possible we might be able to think again in terms of their religion. As things are, however, if we are to think at all we must be content to do so under the limitations of the present hour. We have certain historic creeds and theologies. They are the framework of our standardized religious thought. When the intelligent faith of our

time, for sufficient reasons, changes its view of some small detail of the creed, we do not throw away the creed, any more than we abolish one of our natural sciences at every new discovery of truth. We make room in the science for the new fact, as soon as we are satisfied that it is a fact. We do the same with our religious belief. Now and then in history it has come to pass that the creed became so radically changed they had to make a new one, but where the church has done this once it has changed details in its creed a thousand times. There is no other rational and sensible thing for the church to do.

We honor the great religious leaders of the past, but we do not consider ourselves absolutely bound to repeat the exact terms of their religious thinking, and certainly not the exact details of their practice. It is clear that many of those men, the wisest Christians of their age, really believed themselves to be at the goal of all true knowledge in religion. They write as if the Bible had been waiting all through the centuries for them to be born, in order to give an interpretation of it to the world that

would never need to be changed. Even where they made no such claims themselves, they have been made for them by their later disciples. And it has taken the world a surprisingly long time to find out the utter absurdity of all such reasoning.

Away back at the beginning of recorded history, such as we read of in the Book of Genesis, men gave us the best ideas of God, of human aspirations and of moral duties that they had. Other men followed century after century, leaving behind them a most interesting and inspiring record of religious development, which culminated at last in the teachings and the work of Jesus Christ. After him we have not looked for any further advance in the basal concepts of religion. No man ever spake as he did, and no other man ever will so speak. He represents the actual goal. His teaching not only brought to completion and fulfilment all that was worthy in the earlier teachings of prophets and sages, but it covered the ground so thoroughly as to leave room for no additions or changes. We could as soon think of a new mathematics in which two times two would be

something other than four, as to think of any moral or spiritual improvement in what Jesus taught or in what he was. When humanity reaches his standard, if it ever does, the end will have come.

The language applied to him in the New Testament has never been used of any other being. Throughout its whole history the church has called him divine, with varying conceptions as to just what the word means in this connection. The early Christians seem to have used this term not because they thought it explanatory but rather because it is the largest and noblest descriptive word that there is. For many centuries there was a growing tendency to shape this original enthusiasm as to the wonderful person of Christ into a rigid philosophy. The relationship between him and the Father was made the subject of age-long controversy. Other speculations of the same general character resulted in various dogmas regarding his birth of a virgin, his previous condition of glory, a presumed state of mental conflict between his divine omniscience and the limitations he assumed in becoming man, and

the offering of himself as a willing sacrifice to satisfy certain rabbinical conceptions of divine justice. Out of this there grew up almost an entire theology that centered in the person not of Christ but of his mother, and failed to pass the tests imposed at the Protestant Reformation. The other speculations, however, with little more authority to stand upon if they had any at all, were adopted by the Reformers with slight examination and were handed down to us. They are still fought for, tooth and nail, by a considerable part of modern Protestantism.

In the ministry of Jesus, no single fact stands out more clearly than this, that he expected to have his work carried on by organized effort. He had scarcely begun to teach before he gathered a little company of intimates, whom he held together without additions or changes in personnel until the last. By far the larger part of his reported public work was the training of these men. His clear purpose was to make them not individual propagandists but an organized force. His calm confidence in the last tragic days, that no matter what

might be done to him the work would go on, seems to be based chiefly upon his estimate of the spiritual force he had called into being in this group of men. We cannot read his last recorded words without feeling that he regarded his work as in the highest degree successful. When these men—not the individuals, for some might fail, but the whole body—should be endued with the Spirit of God whom he was to send, he believed that they could not be overcome.

From our point of view we must confess that this was a most unpromising body of men with which to begin a world work. Except for two remarkable experiences, the return of their Master from the dead and the gift of the Holy Ghost, no explanation of their success is possible. They did succeed in a wonderful way. Within a single generation the religion of Christ had been carried through the known world. Wherever those early Christians went with their message, a change in men's ideas of God, in their conduct among their fellowmen, and in their whole outlook upon life and destiny invariably followed.

We shall have occasion to note, in a future chapter, how this first condition of the church was temporary and abnormal. A deterioration soon set in, not altogether discreditable since it came chiefly from the zeal with which those early Christians carried on their work. As we read the Epistles of Paul and the messages to the seven churches in the Apocalypse we recognize a marked change from the almost idyllic conditions immediately following Pentecost. But certainly no one of those people could have imagined the state of division, mutual suspicion, and practical impotency in the midst of wonderful opportunities that the church finds itself in after nineteen hundred years. The first disciples were sent forth as sheep among wolves. Their successors have uniformly suffered more from the horns and hoofs of other sheep than from all the wolves that have been loosed upon them. If we take out of church history the parts that deal with heresies, persecutions of one Christian by another, theological disputes and religious wars, there is very little left. The actual checks and hindrances that the Christian faith has

met from all its open and avowed enemies sink into comparative insignificance beside this monstrous array of misunderstandings and jealousies that in modern days have settled down into iron-bound traditions more like mountain feuds than like ordinary diversities of opinion among gentlemen. Church quarrels are always and everywhere the easiest to start, the bitterest to deal with, and the hardest to terminate among all the differences that arise in civilized society.

A phenomenon so universal as this, and continued so long without essential change, cannot be explained on the ground of mere human perversity. The roots of it go too deep and run back too far to be traceable entirely to personal frailties among believers. This age-long quarreling over opinions is part of a system. It rests upon a basal misconception of Christianity itself. Personal differences, conceit of opinion, and desire to rule will not explain the divided condition of Christendom. Those who engage in such controversies have mistaken views of Christianity itself, and of what it means to be a Christian believer, as

well as wrong impulses toward Christian practice. Consciously or unconsciously they have magnified correctness of opinion out of all proportion to its real value. They have insisted upon testing the genuineness of Christian faith not by the result that it produces in the believer himself but by his subscription to some arbitrary interpretation of Scripture or theological opinion. They have counted it a greater honor paid to Christ to hold exalted opinions about his divine nature and to magnify his atoning office than to obey his simple command to love one another and thus to fulfil every necessary law. They have been willing to tell one another in beautiful language the glory and the wonder of his sacrificial life, but have not been willing to bear one another's burdens and in honor to prefer one another for his sake.

In a word, the dissensions and divisions of historic Christianity have come from putting forward something else than Christlikeness as the best and only unquestionable proof that one is a Christian believer. Whoever has the spirit of Christ, or is sincerely trying to culti-

vate it and giving Christ the glory, is a Christian, perfectly safe for us to associate with and to worship beside under the same roof, even though he may be misinformed on some points of historic doctrine or may not hold exactly our opinion about some statement made in Scripture. Whoever does not have this spirit of Christ, and is making no effort to get it, is not a Christian, no matter what he believes or in what particular list his name happens to be written down. If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

Since it is the lack of brotherhood and not the holding of different opinions that is the cause of disunity, it follows that the union of Christendom will not need to wait until all believers have come round to one kind of theology or have cultivated a uniform taste in matters of worship. Unity will come when a sufficient number of us have learned what Christianity really is. We may hope that the time is drawing near at last when a true church of Christ will be known not by its length of history or its regularity of tradition so much as by the fact that it is actually doing, in a practical

and sensible manner, the work that the church of Christ was organized and commissioned to do.

We are not advocating a general massacre of historic theologies. We need them. They have no value as tests of Christian character but they aid very materially in clarifying our religious views and standardizing our faith. We should always keep our ancient, carefully worded creeds where we can lay our hands upon them, for the present age above all others needs all the help it can get in the direction of clear thinking in religion. It is the one point where we are lamentably weak. But creeds and theologies never should have been used as dividing lines between different bodies of Christians for they do not deal with things that should be regarded as divisive. Their function is to cultivate precision of thought but not to differentiate matters of conviction. The fact that one Christian likes to carry his religious thinking to ten places of decimals should not separate him from another who stops at two places, provided they both have the same number of units.

The events of the past half-dozen years have made the whole problem of the true function of creeds in Christian work much plainer than it ever was before. In spite of the elaborate ingenuity with which the historic confessions of faith were formulated, so as to provide for every possible refinement in theological gymnastics that our forefathers could think of, we now find them utterly inadequate to express the scrupulous contentiousness of modern bigotry. The disputes of the present hour are not between holders of different creeds but between different interpretations of the same creed. All is quiet along the denominational Potomac, but the isotherm of theological soundness runs anywhere, and shifts its location every few days. It really begins to look as if the last days of religious factiousness have come, and that contentions will wear themselves out and disappear from the lack of ability among the disputants to distinguish one position from another.

The review of church history that we here present must be fragmentary in the nature of the case, for we are dealing only with incidents

that happen to bear most directly upon modern problems. In the first chapter we take up the century that produced the New Testament. No other literature ever written has held so great a place in human thought or has been so diligently read. We are seriously hampered in the historical study of these supremely important writings because we have so little other literature covering the same period. The events described took place many centuries ago in a very small country, among a people peculiarly separated from other nations for the larger part of its history, and maintaining the spirit of aloofness with extraordinary tenacity. Diligent investigation, however, for the past hundred years or so, has thrown a great deal of additional light upon New Testament times and customs that our fathers did not have. The scholars of Reformation and post-Reformation times were diligent students of Scripture of a certain kind. They compared texts with painstaking care. They produced translations into the vernacular that can hardly be surpassed. As reverent and exhaustive

word-studies of Scripture, their writings leave little to be desired.

As to the actual life and times of the New Testament, however, the Reformers and their immediate successors not only knew very little, but they felt no need of knowing anything at all. For they had evolved a theory of inspiration that made all helps and explanations in Bible study practically unnecessary. To them the Scriptures were not ordinary literature; they had not been written in anything like a natural way, and were not to be studied as such. They were written by revelation, in some mysterious manner so as to fit their statements exactly into the knowledge of each succeeding age. Still further confusion was introduced into this way of thinking by the revival of a wide-spread, though not at this time a very definite, belief in the immediate return of Christ, a type of thought that always accompanies a great religious upheaval. Just as the Apostles were the direct heirs of all that sages and prophets had written, and brought it to a single and final system of truth, so our

pious fathers honestly thought themselves to be standing on the very brink of the ages, foreordained to put all the truth that God had revealed down to their time into one fixed and final system of theology, never to be changed. When we consider the wild speculations that were in the air at the beginning of the sixteenth century, the strained conditions in which their new ecclesiastical systems had to be worked out, and the confusion of piety and politics into which they were constantly falling, the wonder is that the Reformers succeeded in keeping so near the bounds of sanity as they did. We should not judge them by strict modern standards for some of their ideas of inspiration and theology.

A great change has come in our methods of interpreting Scripture. We study the Bible as we try to understand any other literature. We put ourselves, so far as we can, into the places of those who lived in Bible days, and try to look at the matters they are writing about from their point of view. Our effort is to make the Bible as natural as we can, without loss of reverence. Our fathers of a few

generations ago, with the best intentions in the world, treated Bible times and characters very much as the medieval painters represented biblical scenery. The Prodigal Son was an Italian youth, coming home through Tuscan landscapes. The painter did the best he could, but he never had seen even a picture of Palestine. Moses receiving the tables of the law on the summit of the Matterhorn is not ridiculous to us for we feel the evident sincerity of the artist. We have something of the same feeling when we remember that most of our traditional doctrines of inspiration, revelation, redemption, atonement, justification, and other rabbinical concepts, which fitted into the thinking of an Apostle with perfect naturalness, have come to us by a process strikingly like the one that gave us our Madonnas. They are thoroughly biblical in their origin, and beautiful examples of ideal motherhood, but they never actually existed. Many things that we find in our traditional theologies are equally imaginary. They are Jewish and Oriental figures that our fathers treated as literally as they would treat a problem in mathematics. The significance

attached to them in Scripture and the meaning loaded upon them in the creeds are as wide apart as though we were dealing with two different subjects.

Following the New Testament period, we shall take up in the second chapter the years that lie between the last of the New Testament writings and the outbreak of the Protestant Reformation. As this time is fourteen centuries, we must confine ourselves to four topics only. The first is the transfer of Christianity from the Hebrew to the Greek and Roman types of thought, covering a period of about two centuries. We shall make a brief study of the first Ecumenical Council, in the year 325. The next half-dozen centuries are the Dark Ages, in which our interest centers not in the darkness of them but in the great missionary work that was accomplished, the actual Christianizing of Europe. And we shall conclude our study of papal times by taking up the Revival of Learning and the growth of Scholasticism, our chief object being to trace out in this time of awakening mental

activity the development of the kind of think- that gave us our Reformation theologies.

In the third chapter we shall consider the Reformation and post-Reformation times, including the rise and decline of Puritanism, down to the modern age of religion, which began less than a century ago. We can give little attention to the controversies between Protestants and Catholics, for they are practically a dead issue. Our interest is in the controversies among Protestants. We come in this period face to face with the things that show how completely men had learned to put aside the Master's one rule of evidence, "Ye shall know them by their fruits," and had come to substitute for it the medieval rule of judging the purity of one's faith by his agreement or disagreement with the prevailing theological dogmas. We call this attitude of mind medieval, because it enters so constantly into medieval philosophies, but in reality it goes back to the times of the Scribes and Pharisees in the four Gospels. The later development of this rabbinical idea is that

one is to seek acceptance with God not so much by coming into right spiritual relations with him through Christ as by believing something that is absolutely true about Christ. This floating conviction is not always stated in such bald terms as these, but we can trace the effect of it, over and over again, in different periods of church history.

The point of chief interest to us is the connection between this kind of dogmatic teaching and the rise of sectarianism. It would be very unjust to the differing groups of early Protestants to attribute their divisions among themselves to mere contentiousness. They did have some distrust of one another, but the basis of their sectarianism was a profound misunderstanding of the church, which they shared about equally with the Catholics. A popular impression has existed for centuries that the Reformers abandoned Romanism, root and branch, and restored the New Testament church. They did nothing of the kind, for two good and sufficient reasons. They did not desire to sever their relations with historic faith, and they did not know enough about the

New Testament church to restore it even if they had tried. They were not constructing a new religion, but trying to reform an old one. And when all hope of actually changing Romanism enough to make it conform to their ideas of pure religion had to be abandoned, they tried very naturally and very consistently to make their new ecclesiasticisms as safely like the old one, with its glaring inconsistencies removed, as they could. It is to the credit of the Reformers that they loved the familiar beliefs and devotional parts of religion in which they had been brought up from their childhood. Ninety per cent at least of Romish theology was absolutely untouched by the Reformation. We of the present age have rejected some parts of this ninety per cent, but we have done so not by conscious act but by the natural growth and changes of four centuries.

The conception of the church that prevailed when our historic Protestant creeds were formulated is a matter of so much importance that a brief explanation at this point may make it clearer when we take it up in the third chapter. The New Testament idea of the

church is that of a family brotherhood, bound together not by ties of nature or race or language or even of religious training but by the fact of spiritual birth from above. We may say with all confidence that the Reformers never came within sight of this view. To them the church was what it had been for more than a thousand years, the tool of a guaranteed salvation that rested not upon a new birth or anything of the sort but upon a promise made long before to Peter and the other Apostles. Some of the Reformers did break away from the sacramentarianism of the purely papal doctrine and taught a salvation resting finally upon the faith of the believer, of which faith the church was the sponsor and the necessary channel. But the tendency among them all was to keep just as close to the old, Roman idea of salvation by authority as they could. They left the Pope out, but they kept the papacy at every possible point in their theologies. They deserve a good deal of praise, in a time of profound upheaval and almost of anarchy, for keeping their religion in the safest channels that they knew.

Of course salvation by authority gives the opportunity to draw a line between one's religion and his personal character. It would be most unjust to Romanist and Protestant alike in those days to say that either of them was indifferent to righteousness so long as he could have an ecclesiastically clear title to heaven. But there can be no question that the tendency of religion ran a good deal in that direction and that the difference between Romanist and Protestant in this regard is not always so pronounced as our own sectarian self-esteem would like to have it. Possibly the type of moral living was higher on the whole among Protestants, for they were more interested in religion, but he would be a courageous historian who tries to prove this by individual instances. One could rob widows' houses and be in quite as good standing in Protestant as in Catholic churches, so far as we can see. The people of that age were not ready for the wholesale transfer of religious ideals from medievalism to modern standards. That kind of change cannot be made in an hour. It must have time to grow.

The Reformation corrected many abuses and gave the nations of Central and Western Europe a great impetus in the right direction. But it left the substructure of religion, the medieval ideas of living and believing and being saved, practically where they had been for centuries. The great religious leaders of the time did study the New Testament and show in their writings that they meditated upon its deep spiritual truths. But candor compels us to admit that we cannot always find the effect of these meditations when they came to devising ecclesiastical systems and to battling with one another over creeds. One of the most unfortunate inheritances of the modern church from that age is the tendency to put the management of ecclesiastical matters into the hands of people whose religious development has been along the line of emotional piety rather than of strictly honorable and upright living. This may explain why so many religious people grow uniformly harsher, narrower and more censorious as they advance in what they call the spiritual life. Emotion is essential in religion, of course. We are

not intellectual or moral machines but living human beings. But emotion that is cultivated for its own sake, for the honorable place it may give us among the saints and especially for the purpose of assuring some otherwise unlovable characters that they have had a genuine religious experience, is a dangerous article to meddle with. Trying to feel religious without being willing to pay the price of being religious is the surest road to spiritual bankruptcy that we know.

In the final chapter we shall consider some of the special problems of the modern church. Here also we cannot hope to cover more than a fraction of the ground. The modern church, like every other modern institution, suffers from the fact that it is trying to do a great many more things than it can do well. We can deal with only a few, that are really practical. We base our whole conception of what sound religion is upon the natural relationship that exists between faith and life. Any kind of religious teaching that fails in giving proper emphasis to Christlikeness of character as the best proof that there is of being a real

Christian believer is heresy and ought to be treated as such. This does not mean that the Christian faith is to be stripped of its supernatural elements and reduced to a mere good-natured scheme of social betterment. Christianity is a religion, dealing with fundamental principles and not with the superficial adornments of life. It is a militant faith. It never will be satisfied until it has turned the world upside down. It is intolerable to think of a power like this idly marking time for another four centuries because of its own internal corruptions and disagreements. We need to cut loose from our dead past even more than the church needed to do in the days of Luther, and we have a great deal clearer idea of what we want than those people possibly could have.

In addition to the questions that concern its divided state and changed ideas of Scripture interpretation, to which we have already referred, the more prominent problems of the modern church center about the subject of education and the attitude of traditional religion toward the theories and claimed results of modern science. There is a prevailing im-

pression that the preaching of the gospel has lost the hold that preaching once had upon educated minds. This might come from more than one cause, and a little searching of the educated mind itself might be wholesome, but for all that, theology cannot be absolved from the common duty devolving upon all science of constantly seeking to express its teachings in clearer language. If any authority in modern church life has power to keep its accredited teachers thinking and speaking in the exact mental terms and measurements of three centuries ago, certainly that part of the modern church deserves to lose its hold upon intelligent minds. And it is quite beside the question to say that we are teaching a system of revealed truth, and therefore cannot be held to the changing standards of ordinary knowledge. For that is the very point in dispute. The revelation was given nineteen centuries ago. The interpretations of it that we are thus required to maintain are less than four centuries old. Who is able to prove that the modern church, with its vastly increased resources of documentary and historical evidence,

is not quite as capable of interpreting ancient writings as the church was three centuries or two centuries ago?

Spiritual life to-day, with its multitude of new and changing problems, cannot thrive on medieval religion any more than modern physical life could keep its pace successfully on the medieval practice of medicine. There can be no doubt that George Washington was bled to death in the well-meant efforts of the best medical practice of his day to reduce his fever. But any physician to-day who would use the same treatment in the case of a patient of far less value to the world than Washington was would find himself in trouble with the law. Surgery still practices phlebotomy in certain rare and unusual conditions but no longer as a cure-all. And there are some things in traditional theology that might be revived to a limited extent just now, with great profit to some people whom we might name. But if we are to load our preaching down with them for fifty-two Sundays in the year as our fathers did we should find them more dangerous than helpful. We have a way of saying that the

times have changed. This statement does not mean that the natural laws governing human thought have shifted their bearings and are running wild. It means only that society itself, as well as the individuals in it, is subject to certain evolutionary forces and processes, which forces, in the manner of modern science, we estimate from their effects rather than from theories of their probable origins.

Religion and the natural sciences have come into conflict in the present age, but not for the first time. When Copernicus, twenty-six years after the outbreak of the Protestant Reformation, started men's minds in the right direction as to the motions of the universe, placing the sun at the center of the planetary system, his views were immediately contradicted, with abundant proofs, in the name of religion. Catholic and Protestant alike suspended their mutual hostilities until they could put down this new enemy of the common faith. Luther called him an "upstart astrologer" and other names, and ridiculed his idea of a revolving world. Aside from the unquestionable fact that the oceans would be spilled out once a day,

the language of Scripture on the subject was explicit and beyond all dispute. The Bible speaks of the "firmament," a word that means "solid," with the waters above and below mysteriously divided on a certain creative day, the greater and lesser lights rising and setting, as any man who is not a fool can plainly see with his own eyes. Luther was one of the very best Hebrew scholars of his age, and indeed has had very few superiors in any age. He knew what he was talking about.

If Luther had not believed with all his heart that the Bible is the actual and literal communication of God to man, coming from one who is incapable of deceiving, written by men specially guided by the Holy Ghost, it is quite safe to say there would have been no Protestant Reformation, at least at that time. Moreover, if Luther, after directing successfully for a quarter of a century the greatest religious movement since the days of the Apostles, had been the kind of man tamely to yield a point like this to Copernicus, a dabbler in theories who had not mental ability enough even to become a Protestant, and had been willing to go

before the scholars of Europe with the statement that in his opinion the Hebrew word for "solid" could mean "thin air," we can imagine what would have happened. He certainly would have started an explosion that would make our latest twentieth-century wrangles on the subject of evolution read like the very peace that passeth understanding. Luther did nothing of the kind. He had too much regard for truth. These upstart theories contradicted Scripture and he put them down. We can hardly estimate the completeness of the victory. Copernicus had a few friends and disciples, all Catholics, who seem to have stood by his theories at the safest distance they could find, but so far as we are able to learn, there were no Protestants among them. That side believed in Scripture and stood by Genesis to a man. Even the mild and gentle Melancthon advocated the suppression of all Copernican discussions by law.

Copernicus himself escaped the fate of Galileo, ninety years afterward, by dying on the very day his book "De Orbium Celestium Revolutionibus" was published. But in the

Catholic church his theories were put under the ban for three centuries. Nevertheless there are people, even yet, who believe them. Since the days of Pope Pius VII good Catholics are permitted to have doubts on the subject of a solid firmament, while among Protestants, long before, there had come a gradual and somewhat shamefaced reinterpretation of Scripture that twists the language of it out of all resemblance to its literal meaning. At the present time we can find in the very amen corner those who turn unblushingly from the words of inspiration and pin their faith to speculations of men who spend their nights, with purely human contrivances, studying the sky. It is enough to make Luther—and John Wesley also, who lamented that the speculations of a certain Isaac Newton in his day were unsettling the faith of many—turn over in their honored graves.

It is always the way. For a century scientific men have been digging into the earth to gratify a curiosity as to how it was made, in spite of the fact that the Book of Genesis

tells us, with every needed detail, all about it. Three score years ago Charles Darwin began unsettling the faith of many as to the origin and transmission of life, even the life of man himself. Except for the stand taken by a faithful few in our churches and missions, who can hardly be said to rank with Luther and Wesley except in persistence, these views on geology and evolution seem to have the support of schools and colleges over the whole world, though they contradict Scripture almost as plainly as the views of Copernicus did. Is it going to be necessary to reinterpret Genesis again? Is the Bible to be like the Sibylline Books after all, greatest in value when the larger part of it is gone?

The times have changed. Medieval methods of thinking no longer prevail in sciences, mechanical arts, politics, or religion. The effort to save souls by spiritual alchemy, in gospel tent or stately cathedral, by magic art or by traditional authority, by anything indeed other than a change of heart that shows itself in life, is merely to repeat in the twentieth century the old search for the philosopher's

stone. Base soul metal cannot be turned into gold by securing the inscription of its name upon the roll of the only true church. We cannot whip our modern minds into that way of reaching out after truth any more.

In the fourth century people tried to settle the question of the Trinity and the nature of Christ by argument and the casting of votes. They left the question where they found it, with a few added perplexities. In the days of the Renaissance and scholasticism they tried to find the absolute truth by carefully watching the operations of the human mind. The antics of the said human mind are still the most confusing subject that we know of. At the Reformation they cast down the mighty from their seats and brought forth at last the real church. But the mighty seem to be still in their seats, and the church is still looking for something real. Nevertheless all these strivings for more light have had their incalculable value. They are parts of a mighty process of growth. They emphasized the need of careful study and repeated investigation. They set men to thinking upon new levels.

They gave novel and wholesome impulses in the direction of personal religion. They wakened again and again an interest in Bible study of which we are just beginning to reap the real harvest. And by demonstrating the limitations of all work that has human elements in it they have driven the church repeatedly back to the inexhaustible sources of its power.

The forms of church organization and the types of effort put forth century after century have always reflected to a large extent the character of the age that produced them. The best minds in the church have always sought for liberty. The narrowest minds have always opposed it. But this does not mean in religion, any more than in other things, that all efforts to advance are marked by wisdom, or that conservatism is not sometimes the wisest position that the church can assume. The Christian faith, however, more than any and all other human interests, rests upon certain principles that give it an unmistakable tendency toward progress. One of its most fundamental policies is based upon the statement that new wine cannot be put into old bottles with safety.

The loss of the old bottles might be borne, but the wine would be spilled. The most evident sign of the times is the fact that the new cloth of modern religious knowledge and culture is already making the rents larger in the hopeless old garments of church life that mistaken timidity is still trying to repair. The conviction grows upon us that reconstruction and not repair is what we need.

The Master on the shore is calling to this toiling age, more clearly, we think, than to any previous age in history, that the shallow-water methods of the fruitless night, now almost past, will never succeed. The church must launch out into the deep and let down its nets with a wider sweep of faith.

THE CHURCH COURAGEOUS

As my days lengthen, my creed shortens.

ROSWELL DWIGHT HITCHCOCK.

Religion seems to have grown an infant with age, and requires miracles to nurse it, as it had in infancy.

JONATHAN SWIFT.

It is a superficial and unphilosophical temperament that disparages institutions. For institutions are only another name for that organized life by which God rules the world.

BISHOP H. C. POTTER.

The practice of the Apostles is not an invariable rule or law of binding force upon succeeding ages. They acted according to the circumstances of the church in its infant and persecuted state.

BISHOP HOOKER.

The collection of sacred books was brought about gradually, spontaneously, silently. The judgment appeared as the natural manifestation of the life of the Christian body, and not as the logical consequence of definite principles.

BROOKE FOSS WESTCOTT, in "Canon of the New Testament."

We do not want to read the New Testament any less. But we do want to read it in rather a different way. We want to heighten the personal religion of which it is the principal source and inspiration, without being captured by the spiritual waywardness and obstinacy which have led to the innumerable divisions of the Christian world and have paralyzed its power of corporate witness.

R. H. MALDEN.

CHAPTER I

THE CHURCH COURAGEOUS

HISTORIC Christianity goes back to two principal records. The first is a group of four memorabilia called "Gospels" or good news, covering a brief period of the life and ministry of Jesus, a village carpenter of Nazareth, in Galilee. He made no name for himself among conspicuous or influential people. All that we know of his teaching, somewhat after the manner of the older Hebrew prophets, rests upon the testimony of a few men, obscure like himself, who had become his devoted followers. His violent death at the age of about thirty-three years, though under the form of a legal execution, was the result of an outbreak of religious fanaticism. No literature of any kind of which we have record was written by him, or under his super-

vision, or in obedience to any command or suggestion that he ever gave.

The other record deals with the organized work of these disciples after the death of their Master. The part of it that covers the very earliest days was not written until forty years or more after the events that it describes. It is not the report of an eye-witness but comes to us in the form of traditions, collected and written out by a man named Luke, for his friend Theophilus. It begins with the experiences of about a hundred and twenty people, already believers in the prophetic power of Jesus, eleven of whom had been chosen by him as intimate friends and companions. The latter part of the same book, mainly filled with the experiences of the great Apostle St. Paul, is written in a style quite different from the earlier report of traditions, and contains many experiences of Luke himself. Following this Book of the Acts there are a number of Epistles, one running into an elaborate apocalypse, that carry the history of the church down to the end of the first Christian century.

Between the ministry of Jesus and the first gathering of the church there was a brief period, falling within the fifty days between Passover and Pentecost, covered by what seems to have been an independent record, though it comes to us as the closing part of the Gospels, and runs over into the Acts. It is the testimony of certain disciples who claimed to have seen and to have talked with their Master after he was risen from the dead. These experiences were not reported originally by one person but by two at least, for there is a marked difference in the reports of appearances in Jerusalem and in Galilee. Those who claimed to be present on these occasions clung to their story all their lives, and indeed most of them lost their lives mainly because of their unswerving testimony. The whole record clearly indicates that if it had not been for these reappearances of their Master, the disciples never would have undertaken the task of preaching a new religion to the world. Throughout the Acts and the Epistles this single item, the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, is uniformly regarded as the very crux and center of the whole Christian

system, the chief of all the historic facts upon which their faith was built.

When we consider the time, the peculiar history of the Jewish people and the fact that this question of the resurrection was constantly discussed among them, it could not be called surprising that a resurrection tradition should arise, of the usual childish and superstitious form. They were not troubled by any of our modern ideas concerning the nature and the origin of life. They did not look upon death as the result of natural law but as the cutting off of days by an independent, personal power, who might repent, or change his purpose, and undo what he had done. They believed that their Master had brought back the dead, just as any great prophet could, by producing this change of purpose in him who caused the death. They had no clear idea of immortality apart from bodily resurrection. King Herod believed in resurrection. Martha believed it. The Romans had sealed the tomb and had set a watch because of so many rumors on this subject. The disciples were not looking for the return of their Master so soon, but

there was nothing in their habit of thought or previous convictions that would dispose them to doubt the word of any among their fellow-disciples who might claim to have seen the risen Jesus.

Yet this is just what they did. The strangest feature of the early resurrection narratives is the surprise and incredulity of the disciples. And their perplexity seems not to have diminished, even after he had appeared to them again and again. We judge that it was not the fact but the manner of the resurrection that confused them, being so different from anything that they could have imagined beforehand. That a great prophet should come back with power and glory, in visible preparation for restoring the kingdom of Israel, would have seemed to them entirely natural. The words of the two disciples going to Emmaus show this attitude of mind very clearly. But to come secretly, at no time except when he could find them quite alone; to tell them nothing except what he had already told; to supplement his minute revelations concerning the heavenly estate on the night of the betrayal, with not a

single word as to his own recent experiences there; not even to bring the promised Comforter, but only to repeat his promise without essential change; and then to close these indeterminate interviews with a mysterious departure that left them no plan or task for the immediate future, except to look for something that was not adequately described—surely no imagination in the world was ever vivid enough to make up such stories as these. It is an absurdity utterly without parallel, to think of a few simple-minded fishermen laying plans to preach a world religion upon a manufactured foundation such as these reported interviews with their Master, the rejected and crucified Nazarene. We must dismiss the whole hypothesis of conscious deception on the part of the disciples, as not worthy of a moment's thought.

They saw, or certainly thought they saw, the risen Jesus. And the remarkable thing, putting all other mysteries of these peculiar experiences quite in a secondary place, is the effect of them upon the disciples themselves. When he first came he found a disheartened and

partly scattered group of men. Fifty days later they had grown into heroes. The power that can be explained only by the possession of unbounded faith was theirs. And yet he had given them, in all the times he had met them, not a single proof or argument that they could use in convincing any possible gainsayer. Unlettered men though they were, they must have known that they had no actual evidence of the resurrection that was worth the breath it would take to tell it. Their own testimony in such a case could have no other effect than to provoke derision. They said they had seen their Master. But who were they? Who else had seen him? Why did he hide himself here and there with them, when the whole Jewish nation, and the world, were eagerly waiting for proof of the very things that they told?

The modern mind confesses to an unholy curiosity as to what might have happened if the risen Christ had suddenly appeared to Caiphas or to Pontius Pilate. Why not? Neither of them could injure him now. He had said his kingdom was not of this world. Now he could bring proof of it that nobody could

question. And the fact that we ourselves have such views as these on the subject is one of the weaknesses of modern religion. The insistent and unconquerable desire to find knock-down arguments, the hope of some day coming into possession of evidence enough to club the most blatant opponent of Christianity into submission, is one of our inheritances from centuries of religious controversy that never came in sight of what Jesus was teaching. It is not at all different from the Mohammedan effort to convert the world by the sword. It is the very temptation that the Master met and overcame in the wilderness. The disciples themselves, before he rose from the dead, seemed to have had exactly these ideas of advancing his cause. They were hoping to sit at his right hand and his left, and had utterly mistaken his promise that they should judge the twelve tribes of Israel. In such a case, the twelve tribes were judged already, and something very unpleasant was coming to them.

The most striking feature of these peculiar interviews with the risen Master is the evident fact that there gradually came into the minds

of the disciples an entirely different idea of his kingdom and of their relation to it. Just what produced the change is the supreme mystery of the resurrection. The nearest experience akin to it that we can think of is the birth of love. Two people meet time after time, speaking of indifferent subjects, having no experiences at all dissimilar from ten thousand other human incidents, and then find that their whole outlook upon life, their purposes in it, and their possible enjoyment of it have utterly changed. So the disciples wakened to new conceptions of religion. They could no longer think of their Master wanting to triumph over Pilate or anyone else. He had already made his appeal to all that was highest in the man, and when that failed there was nothing else to do. The kind of religion that Jesus came to establish cannot be propagated by mere marshaling of proofs and arguments. To have dragged the most conspicuous example of unbelief in Jerusalem at the chariot-wheels of a triumphant demonstration, untouched by a spiritual appeal but convinced against his will by undeniable facts, might do for some modern types of evangelism,

but it would never bring a Pentecost. The Christian church was to be founded upon ideas of the Kingdom of God very different from these. Nothing but changed hearts passes current there. The triumph of one opinion over another is a good way to drive out faith, but if they wished to produce faith they must first cultivate love for God and for their fellowmen, upon which alone can true and saving faith be built.

It is greatly to be feared that if some of us modern believers had enjoyed the opportunities of those first disciples we might have wrecked the Christian church at the start, instead of well nigh wrecking it nineteen centuries afterward, by our inordinate curiosity. We want to know where he got the clothes he appeared in, how he secured the food and built the fire by the lake. We are full of conjectures. Their minds were so open that we call them blank. They seem to have been in the condition described in the scene upon the Mount of Transfiguration, and when they spoke they scarcely knew what they said. Only once did Peter break over this reserve, after the early break-

fast on the shore, and he was gently and properly rebuked. Their Master told them little in these interviews, for they already knew far too much. They had made up their minds as to the kind of religion the world needs. Israel was to be restored. The religion of the Jews, with a few added features, was to be planted upon the ruins of the Roman Empire. The day of vengeance was at hand. They were going to show to the world what the chosen people were chosen for.

Then the Master came. He used no arguments. Such mistaken ideas of religion as these cannot be corrected by logic. He brought them no definite plans. They had too many plans now. He brought nothing but himself. And as they met him, time after time, as their hearts burned within them when he reopened the old, familiar Scriptures again and again, with the new light breaking upon them, the conviction took shape that their Master, even in heavenly glory, had as much desire to be with them again as they had to be with him. He had come not to teach them anything but that his joy might be in them and that their joy

might be full. They learned that resurrection is not a dogma to be proved but the natural state of a new life, given from above; the perfect restoration of the only relationships in life that are worth having. Their experience was something like that of St. Paul, and of all others who have met the risen Lord, not to be known by its evidences but by its effect upon themselves. They had known Jesus in the flesh. Henceforth they were to know that Jesus no more. They would have been hopelessly hampered in trying to preach the gospel if their knowledge had been confined to what the theologians call his "estate of humiliation." They now had a glorified Christ to preach, the same one indeed that we have to preach. Jesus as a teacher is a wonderful basis for religion. That story never grows old. But there is no gospel to preach except Christ crucified and risen again.

In the report of his appearing to the eleven upon the mountain in Galilee, it is said that they worshiped him, but some doubted. The narrative shifts abruptly at this point, as though the writer had now told us all we could

ever wish to know. He left out the one thing that we do wish to know, whether they continued to doubt, or were convinced; and if they were convinced we should like very much to know how it was done. It is incredible that the writer, presumably Matthew, did not know this part of the incident quite as well as the part that he tells us. And he must have been a strange tax-gatherer indeed if he did not know human nature well enough to realize that if it was proof he was trying to set forth he should have told us the rest of the story, or else he should have left out this part of it altogether.

If Matthew's thought, however, had nothing to do with evidence—and the narrative broken off in the middle reveals the unconscious working of a mind unspeakably exalted whenever he thought of that blessed companionship, believed to be lost for the rest of this life, but now restored in wonderful winsomeness forever—it is difficult to see how the Spirit of God could give him better words than this fragmentary sentence in which to anticipate some of the richest spiritual experiences of millions and mil-

lions of believers, all down the centuries. We all have had our doubts, right in the face of evidence. Others about us have been joyfully believing, while we, with the same opportunities, have been unable to believe. Can we explain what became of our doubts? Very seldom indeed do we know the manner of their going. All that we know is they went. They simply dropped away and left us free. They did not come from the lack of argument in the first place, and they did not go for the abundance of it. Faith is not belief but adventure, and doubt is only the under side of faith. The experience of these eleven men upon the mountain carried in it a promise of their future usefulness that is almost enough in itself to account for Pentecost. They had been believers. They still were, the whole eleven of them, though some doubted. For they did not doubt Christ. They only questioned whether this appearance that they saw actually was Christ. The believers did not draw aside their skirts from the inquirers, in the modern fashion that we all know so well, and call them rationalists. They did not set themselves above

their questioning brethren as a superior kind of Christians. They did not fall into dispute. We judge that the difference between the two parties was the question whether this was a disembodied appearance, or was actual flesh and bones. So far as the record tells us, these two opinions among the Apostles persisted down to the Day of Pentecost and later. And there was no difference in spiritual power on that day because there had been, and probably still were, among the Apostles themselves two theological views as radically divergent as anything that ever came up between Catholic and Protestant, Unitarian and Trinitarian, upon a question that is as fundamental in Christianity as any question can be, namely the nature of Christ's resurrection body. The fact that men of such diverse views on such a subject could yet work together in perfect harmony undoubtedly had much to do with bringing the first Christian Pentecost. A similar act among modern Christians would bring Pentecost again.

These early preachers were Hebrews, and their audiences were Hebrew. They quoted

Scripture by the page, as is evidenced in the reported sermons of Peter and Stephen, and their quotations hit the mark even less frequently than most of ours do. But when they came to speak of Jesus, power went forth with what they said. They had been with him, in every sense in which the words can be used. They appealed to facts, of course, for Christianity is historically built upon things that occurred. But they did not depend upon mere proof and argument. Their unanswerable plea was not what could be said about their faith but what that faith made of those who sincerely and intelligently accepted it.

We take up next the story of the early church. It was not an elaborate organization. For a time it seems to have been little more than an advanced school of Hebrew thought. They counseled in their upper chamber and worshiped in the Temple. Previous to the Day of Pentecost they had taken a step toward organization that seems to have been ill advised. Surmising, by a fearful wrench of Scripture, that the number of the Apostles must be kept at twelve, and that the essential

qualification of an Apostle was what he had seen and heard, and not the fact that he had been called by the Master, they chose by lot Matthias, one of the two candidates who could pass this test. He drops out of the record so promptly that we are unable to conjecture how well he filled his man-made apostleship. What we know is that he never displaced Judas, who still holds the twelfth position in every list, picture, and group of statuary in the world. We could not do without him.

A real problem, however, soon appeared. It grew out of the necessity of caring for the poor, and especially for those who had come to Jerusalem without making provision for an extended stay, and had joined the number of the believers. The local members of the church did what was natural and necessary. Those who had salable property disposed of it to provide for this need. Afterward some who had possessions in distant places did the same. In the enthusiasm there arose the conviction that all property, sold and unsold, held by Christians was not theirs, but belonged to the whole number of believers. They were not instituting

a new social order, or thinking of such a thing. They were merely pulling down their barns because of the sudden abundance of the harvest.

The money, thus wastefully provided, was brought to the Apostles, who were just then the busiest men in the world. They had one clear and unmistakable precedent. If they had held any opinion at all of being under a rigid and divinely ordered system of church government, their course was very plainly marked out for them. Judas had carried the bag. They had elected Matthias to be his successor and to take his office. The duty of administering this fund plainly belonged to Matthias. The early church, however, had not fallen into the modern church's slavery to precedent. The Apostles called a mass meeting and boldly launched a scheme that is not in the Old Testament and is not hinted of in any of their previous relations with the Master. It was the clearest possible case of pure synagogue democracy. A new church office was created on the spot. Seven men, a Hebrew number, were chosen and set apart by the laying on of hands.

When they chose Matthias they had prayed first and then cast lots. Now they voted first and prayed afterward. The art of church government was coming on by leaps and bounds. These seven men, solemnly ordained by what seems to have been a synagogue ceremony, were selected not to preach but to distribute alms. Their commission was to serve tables, so that the preaching could be done by those who knew how. Some of the seven refused to abide by their instructions. We are not told what kind of care Stephen gave to his widows, but the first thing we learn of him he has abandoned them and is preaching to the Jews with such power and success as to lead to his own martyrdom.

Another shoemaker who did not stick to his last was Philip. He soon appears in the apostolic offices of preaching and baptizing, with such prominence as to crowd the real Apostle of the same name completely off the stage, and we never hear of him again. The early church was more interested in getting the work done than it was concerned over the manner of doing it. The records are too

scanty to admit of dogmatizing, but the fact is palpably clear that they had no idea of a foreordained and divinely authoritative system of church government, definitely given and never to be changed. So much volunteer service led to confusion, and they found it necessary to put authority into the hands of those who showed the ability to keep some kind of order among the saints. Formal church government was of slow and natural growth. When their system proved to be inadequate, or did not suit them, they changed it.

They deferred to the opinion of the Apostles, very naturally, as having been intimately associated with the Master. Apostolic leadership was much in evidence but Apostolic authority had not yet appeared. Simon Peter, first of the Twelve and earliest preacher of all, got himself into trouble by admitting Gentiles to fellowship and was called upon to explain. Not all his self-appointed inquisitors put together could have had Peter's opportunities to know just what was the mind of the Master in such a case. But so far from exercising his authority as Primate Apostle, or even citing the

language of the Great Commission to preach the gospel to every creature, we find Peter speaking almost in a tone of apology. He admits that he had not thought of Christianity as anything but an exclusively Hebrew faith until the matter had been made clear to him in a vision. It is greatly to be regretted that visions have gone out of style in the modern church. A great sheet let down by the four corners, with a few near-human ancestors in it, would not shock the sensibilities of any twentieth-century brother more profoundly than Peter's animals went contrary to every prejudice that he had. And it might help a little toward the settlement of some present-day controversies.

So many wonderful things had come suddenly into the lives of these devout and sincere followers of the Christ that they could not yet reason out each separate truth in all its logical bearings. The natural effect of faith, then as now, was not to force the religion of all men into one exact mold but to develop each man independently along the line of his own highest capabilities, at a speed in exact proportion to

his own teachableness. They had not arrived at the problem of just how little faith one can have and still be a Christian, or how much of adulteration faith can stand before it passes over the line and becomes unbelief.

If we stand at the thirteenth chapter of the Book of the Acts we are between the two natural parts of the Christian church. On the farther side, it is the church of tradition. It had no records, at least none that have been preserved. The wonderful events upon which it was based and by which it grew for half a century were handed down by oral legends. Compared with ordinary legends they are exceptionally reliable. They report many things which we should unhesitatingly set down as fiction, if we were to find them in other narratives of equal antiquity. In the legends of the early church, however, we must take into consideration the very exceptional nature of the events themselves which they report. It is not reasonable, for example, to compare the New Testament miracles with similiar stories that concern purely normal periods of history. The cases are not parallel. The most that we

can say of the part of the New Testament preceding the thirteenth chapter of the Acts is that the language of it is too poetic and imaginative to be bound down by mathematically strict rules of interpretation. Some leeway must be given as to the exact significance of this or that statement, or we shall go utterly wild in our efforts to comprehend this part of the sacred narrative.

In the church of tradition we find practically all the miracles of the New Testament, nearly all the mysticism, and a very pronounced type of unthinking faith. These are abnormal experiences. Just how much the abnormal character of them was heightened in the telling is a question that different readers of the New Testament will deal with in different ways. Our immediate spiritual ancestors of the Puritan times had no question where they drew the line. The mystery to them was entirely in the events that were reported, and the reports were absolutely literal. Some modern Bible readers go clear over to the opposite view. They insist that the incidents which the Gospel writers describe, and the

originals of the early legends from which Luke compiled the first ten chapters of the Acts, were as bald and colorless as the daily life of a modern American village, and that the mystery is wholly in the way they were finally narrated. These are the two extreme opinions. How intelligent readers of the New Testament are to understand these records depends a good deal upon their type of mind, and whether their natural inclinations are toward or against a belief in miracles.

In the legend narratives we find a naïve and refreshing type of faith. These early believers do not know what fear is, and when they meet danger it is with open defiance. They rather enjoy being arrested and imprisoned, for escape is certain and the experience is pretty sure to be interesting. Peter is delivered by prayer, and when he appears at the door of the very house where they are praying for him, they refuse to believe that it is Peter, though we can hardly call this an exclusive experience of the early church. Peter himself, on the housetop, hears what he recognizes as a divine command to slay and eat, and three times refuses

to obey, though one would think Peter had had trouble enough already with the number three to make him more careful. Believers were of one heart, which is always possible. But they were of one mind also, and that can be the case only in the very childhood of a religion.

On the hither side of the thirteenth chapter of the Acts is the church of history. We find a faith that faces enormously greater tasks but lacks the impulsive quality. Systematic administration of relief has taken the place of community of goods. The thorn in the flesh, which is seriously hindering the greatest work in the world, is not removed, though devoutly prayed for. We can hardly avoid regretting that the Pentecostal church did not have a chance at that thorn. Mob violence is no longer met with open defiance, but the boldest soul in Christendom has already been let down over the Damascus wall in a basket. The church in Jerusalem, healing by shadow, delivered by angels, is living on the alms of strangers. The church in Antioch, calmly mapping out its world field and generously measuring its resources against the mighty

task, becomes henceforth the pattern of the Glorious Bride of Christ.

The Antioch church reaches this high place, not in the fashion of a few centuries later by cultivating an exclusive apostolic authority, but in just the opposite manner, by giving its Apostles away. Barnabas and Saul are called for by the Holy Ghost, who does not speak again in the first person singular in the New Testament. And the church rose to the occasion. Being asked to give, it gave its best. We note that the simple democracy of twenty years before has already disappeared. No mass-meeting was called. Five men only, Simeon, Lucius, Manaen, and the two Apostles themselves, are mentioned as taking this momentous step. They are called prophets and teachers. Who was prophet and who was teacher we are not told; and we look in vain for the familiar names, necessary to any true church, of bishop and elder. Saul had already been sent far hence to the Gentiles and had been ordained by the laying on of the hands of Ananias. But he does not hesitate to accept reordination at the hands of mere prophets and

teachers. Of the three hundred denominations in America there is not one so small and ignorant, or occupying quarters in a back alley so obscure, that it could not have told these Antioch brethren how they were making scores of inexcusable blunders in church government, and were not proceeding in the only true and proper New Testament way at all.

In the church of history, miracles seem to have ceased. But nobody asks what had become of them, or why the very men who had accomplished such wonderful things in their early ministry did not go on doing these mighty works in the far more strenuous and dangerous times of their subsequent labors. Some kind of evidence more satisfactory had come in. Whether these Christian leaders still had the power to work miracles and chose not to exercise it, whether they once had this power and had lost it, or whether they never had such power at all but only made use of extraordinary events that got into the report as miracles—all such questions are quite aside from the main issue. The church was doing wonderful things in a wonderful way. It was

bringing a new world into being. It was transforming human lives. Thenceforth the Man of Nazareth must be reckoned with in every great movement that humanity was to know, down to the very end of time.

Unfortunately the church in after centuries has not always been content to stay on its own side of the thirteenth chapter of the Acts. In times of spiritual decline, and in its floundering efforts to rise out of them not by sincere repentance but by the easier road of excitement and enthusiasm, the church all down the ages has showed the usual tendency of all living things, and occasionally reverts to type. It longs to see again the marvels of its earliest days, and to reënter the heaven that lay about it in infancy. The sick religion, like the sick man, "babbles o' green fields." Pietistic theories and ecstatic experiences reappear. Driveling platitude and the unspeakable vulgarity of the half-full religious cup that is trying to run over find multitudes of hearers. Diseased minds, bodies, and estates are healed. Simon the Sorcerer comes forward and fills his purse. And the air is filled with the familiar

rabbinical jargon that announces for the thousandth time that the signs are at last fulfilled that herald the immediate coming of Christ.

All such things are but eddies in the onward current. The enduring work of making this world Christian will be accomplished in the future as in the past by the type of religious effort whose center of gravity falls within its base. When the church grows wise enough to leave its piecemeal infallibilities in the historic fog out of which they came, and sets itself to do a man's task in a man's way, we may hope to see the victories of its first estate far more than repeated in the wonderful opportunities of its present position. The early church was no more willing to do the Lord's work than we are. But they were willing to do it in the Lord's way.

The New Testament contains twenty-seven books, just half of which number, thirteen Epistles and one half of the Acts, tell of the work accomplished by a single man, who was not one of the original disciples nor a member of the original church. These Epistles of St. Paul are the oldest part of the New Testament.

We know pretty accurately the order in which they were written, though we cannot determine the exact dates. They were written and in circulation probably a dozen years before a single one of the four Gospels was prepared. The church was not built upon a book. Jesus sent his disciples to preach his gospel everywhere. He laid upon none of them the charge to write it. The children of Perea whom he took into his arms and blessed could have had grandchildren old enough to read the first written account of the incident that we have. All the early Christians used the Old Testament, in an imperfect Greek translation, but the church made its most rapid growth and many of its most conspicuous conquests before it had any sacred writings of its own.

It is not certain that we have any of the Epistles of St. Paul in the exact form as he dictated them. The four letters that he wrote to Corinth seem to be combined in the two that we have. The Epistle to the Romans closes with personal salutations to about thirty people, though the writer never had been in Rome, and most of the names, if not all, are

of people in Ephesus. There are problems known to every biblical scholar concerning the Epistles to Timothy and to Titus. But these are mere matters of detail. There can be no serious question that the letters as we have them are entirely Pauline.

So far as we can judge, the oldest of the four Gospels is Mark's. It was written by a man of very mature years, who had been the companion of Barnabas and Saul in his younger days and had been with Peter for most of his lifetime. It is the shortest of the Gospels, but this does not mean that Mark did not know a great many true incidents which he failed to report. He had heard Peter tell of those wonderful days with the Master thousands of times, but he was writing a book that must be brief, readily copied, and easily carried. We are not told just what his method of selection was, whether he used his own judgment or chose the incidents that appeared most frequently in Peter's preaching. Of course they are not always the things that we, in our different circumstances, would probably find most interesting, but Mark was writing for

his own time and his own people. If the eleven faithful disciples had come together shortly after Pentecost, with a stenographer, they might have filled a dozen volumes with gospel incidents and sayings that would be of absorbing interest to us. But such books never could have taken the place, and never could have done the work, of the historical Gospels that we have. They are the records of half a century,—and in the fourth Gospel, of three fourths of a century,—of preaching, as well as of a few months' personal experiences with the Master. For they contain the sifted, tested, and ten-thousand-times-repeated incidents and brief discourses that the early Christians found most use for in establishing the church.

Our knowledge of the early church is partly historical, coming from the later chapters in the Book of the Acts, and partly drawn from exhortations and counsels in the Epistles. Many things are told in elaborate detail which the church has had no use for since the first century. Circumcision, speaking in tongues, eating food offered to idols, the eagerly ex-

pected return of Christ in that generation, women's head-dresses, sorceries, divinations, and all such matters are dead issues that occupy considerable space in the New Testament. Other matters of an incidental nature that have proved to be of great interest in later times are not mentioned at all, or are told in such indefinite terms as to have led to age-long controversy. The names and functions of church officers, and the whole problem of church government; the proper method of administering the sacraments, particularly baptism; and even the terms of admitting members to their various churches, upon which terms the whole problem of household or infant baptism rests, as well as the little-understood ceremony or practice of being baptized for the dead, cannot be decided. No misunderstandings or controversies upon these subjects had yet arisen, calling for mention of them in the Epistles. New Testament Christians were interested in more important things. The early churches resemble, in this respect, certain fortunate nations which for long periods of time had no recorded history.

Churches must be governed, or at least they must be administered, in some way. But beyond a general indication that customs in different localities showed considerable variation, we have no real knowledge of details in the New Testament. Church officers have different names: bishops, or "overseers"; elders, a word that means practically the same as "senators"; deacons or ministers; pastors or shepherds; prophets and teachers. Centuries of vigorous controversy as to the precise functions discharged by each of these officials have left the question exactly where it was before the controversies began. If converts are to be baptized at all this ordinance must be administered after some manner, either exactly alike in all cases or with variations. Whoever is interested in the question how this was done has access nowadays to whole libraries on the subject, beyond the possibility of being read with care in any ordinary lifetime. And if one could read them all, he might know more about the controversy than he does, but he would not know anything more about baptism.

Half a dozen descriptive sentences upon these subjects anywhere in the New Testament might have saved centuries of misunderstanding, division, controversies, and religious wars. But it is a question whether a religion of mint, anise, and cummin, such as certainly would have been built upon this information, would not have been worse than all the disputes that have arisen for the lack of it. And it is even a more pertinent question whether controversy would have been saved in any case. If we do not like our fellow-Christians, God himself cannot state truth clearly enough to avoid dispute. If some modern discovery of long-buried manuscripts would give us the exact information upon these subjects that we never have had, such a discovery would only impose upon us the necessity of finding something else to differ about, so long as we continue in the spiritual state of keeping uselessly alive the controversies that we now have. And when we are ready to come together, we can do so without this information precisely as well and as satisfactorily as if we knew it all.

If the Lord Jesus Christ ever had intended

that any church of his should be known as a true church by the accident of having stumbled upon the exact method of New Testament administration, or because it has called its servers of tables by one name rather than by another, or holds a certain one out of several philosophies of religion or has maintained a regularly transmitted succession of ceremonials, then we must admit that all scholarship for centuries has most seriously misunderstood a few incisive words of his to the Scribes and Pharisees. There is only one quest of the modern church that is really worth while. It is not to find proofs or disproofs of verbal inspiration. It is not to determine the opinion that the church must forever hold as to the virgin birth, bodily resurrection, vicarious blood-atonement, or evolution. The one supreme discovery in all ages is to find Christ. The one chief and all-inclusive duty is to obey him. He gave a new commandment, clearly and unmistakably. It has nothing to do with dogmatic speculations or ecclesiastical formalities. People may hold all kinds of views as to his birth, his nature, his resurrection, and

his promised return, and yet may agree exactly in the only demand he ever made upon their loyalty to himself. The church has evaded this issue more or less successfully for nineteen centuries, but it has succeeded in doing so largely through the ignorance of mankind. Some of that ignorance is passing away. The people to whom nine tenths at least of all Protestant preaching must be directed in the present generation are living in the midst of problems that cannot be successfully dealt with by medieval methods of theologizing or burning at the stake. The church is at the parting of the ways, in this sense at least, that it must go on recruiting itself from a rapidly diminishing part of the public alone, which can be depended upon for a few years longer perhaps to be influenced entirely by prejudice and tradition, or it must adapt its preaching and its methods to the conditions that actually exist.

THE CHURCH IMPERIAL

The saints cannot always distinguish between their consciences and their self-wills.

JONATHAN EDWARDS.

I have never yet seen a synod that had a good ending, or one where the evils complained of were removed, but rather multiplied. For the spirit of dispute and the love of power (and do not think I am using too strong language) are exhibited there beyond all ability to describe.

GREGORY OF NAZIANZUM, in a letter to the Emperor Theodosius.

I, your fellow-servant, urge you to forgive each other equally for the unguarded question and the inconsiderate answer. It is a pity that the question was ever raised. No Christianity requires the investigation of such subjects. They arise from the cavils of ill-employed leisure. Few can understand these difficult matters, in which there should be mutual tolerance. In real things you are agreed. Return to your former charity, and restore to me my quiet days and tranquil nights, or you will cause me to weep and to despair of any personal peace.

CONSTANTINE, in a letter to Archbishop Alexander, A. D. 324.

We worship one God in Trinity, neither confounding the persons nor dividing the substance. And yet they are not three Eternals, but one Eternal; not three Almighties, but one Almighty. So the Father is God, the Son, God, and the Holy Ghost, God. And yet they are not three Gods but one God. The Father is made of none. The Son is of the Father alone; not created, but begotten. The Holy Ghost is of the Father and the Son; neither made nor created nor begotten, but proceeding. And in this Trinity, none is afore or after other. None is greater or less than other. But the whole three Persons are coeternal and coequal. (Abridged.)

ATTRIBUTED TO ATHANASIUS, but probably written by Bishop Vergilius of Africa, about the year 490.

CHAPTER II

THE CHURCH IMPERIAL

THE first Christians were of Hebrew lineage, and the type of thought among them was of a strictly traditional character, but this does not mean that they were Old Testament Jews. Both their national and their religious life had been profoundly influenced by centuries of Roman rule. Neither Pharisee nor Sadducee could have told where race loyalty left off and religion began. It was the fixed policy of the Roman Government not to interfere needlessly with the religion of a conquered race, but the character of the Hebrew religion and the stubbornness of the people had forced the rulers of Palestine to pay more attention to religious questions than was their custom in most of the provinces. Every gathering of a religious character was the possible hotbed of a revolt. One of the most

difficult tasks that Jesus had to do was to convince people of the purely spiritual character of his work. Down to the time of his death, his most intimate companions found it impossible to rid their minds of the fixed idea that there must be something political behind his teaching.

The early church soon drifted away from the rigid Judaism of the first disciples. Most of the ministry of Jesus that is reported in the first three Gospels took place in Galilee, and his earliest disciples were almost exclusively Galileans. But when the persecutions arose after the death of Stephen, and the Christians were scattered, they did not turn to Galilee, where it would seem that the way was best prepared for continuing their work and establishing new churches, but went to other places. The whole region of Galilee suddenly and completely disappears from the narrative. We read of Peter in Jerusalem and Joppa, but not in Capernaum or Bethsaida. Sincerely devoted to his own people as Paul was, he found the Gentiles uniformly easier to reach with the gospel. By the close of the century the church

was so much a Gentile organization that the Hebrew terms quoted in the fourth Gospel were translated, and Jewish customs were explained at length, to make the book comprehensible to its readers. A century afterward it would have been almost as difficult to find a Hebrew Christian as it is to-day.

Hebrew literature, however, maintained its place in the church with no perceptible diminution of influence. The Old Testament soon had more readers among Christians than among Jews. The Jewish Sabbath, the most fixed among all their institutions, gave way to the Christian Lord's Day. Questions of sacrifice, apocalyptic hopes, clean and unclean meats, and such periodic feasts as were not associated with Christian history soon disappeared. In place of them we find in the second and third centuries that Christian literature is permeated more and more with Greek speculations concerning the nature of Deity and the characteristics of the human soul. But the constant use by the Christians of the Old Testament, and the thoroughly Hebrew character of the the New Testament

writings, profoundly influenced this type of thought. The prevailing religious philosophy that arose was neither Greek nor Hebrew but somewhere in the region between them.

Naturally the first development of this line of inquiry that reached the proportions of a church-wide movement dealt with the question of the nature of Christ. On the one hand there was the Hebrew idea of the Messiah, and on the other the various classical conceptions of demigods in human form, offsprings of deities and similiar speculations, in accordance with the almost universal tendency of the time to pay divine honors to exalted personalities of any kind, whether rulers or philosophers or saints. Out of it all there grew up year after year a kind of Christology that gradually shaped itself into a crude and primitive trinitarianism, quite different from the refined and clear-cut philosophical conceptions of a century or two later. Various efforts to restate the Johannine and Pauline teachings concerning the nature of Christ in terms of the prevailing dialectics had reached a state of development by the close of the third century that was

fairly satisfactory to the best minds of the church. This development was hastened by various heresies that arose, making it necessary for the scholars of the church to prepare formal statements of belief. The ancient heretic, like the modern variety, usually made a noise out of all proportion to the profundity of his thought or the importance of his following, but he had to be answered, nevertheless.

About the year 318 a learned presbyter of Alexandria named Arius began writing books in criticism of what had come to be the prevailing view of the deity of Christ. He insisted that Scripture language will not bear such rigid interpretations as theologians were then using. His argument upon this negative point was well conducted, but he was not so happy in his efforts to state his own positive opinions. The general tendency of orthodox reasoning was to regard Christ as a single personality of double nature, both human and divine. Arius sought to avoid the duality of this conception of being, and at the same time to keep away from certain heretical speculations that had already been discussed and

practically abandoned. His statements are not always clear, but possibly we do not misrepresent his position by saying that he regarded the nature of Christ not as dual but partaking in absolute completeness and perfection of all the qualities both of the human and of the divine; a nature entirely unique in the scale of being, defined in the fourth Gospel as the "only begotten." It is somewhere between the "tertium quid" of the older theologians and the "God-man" of later schools of reasoning. The modern intelligence has difficulty in comprehending the eagerness and anxiety with which the thinkers of the fourth century burrowed into such problems as these.

The condition was exceptionally favorable at this time for staging a heresy trial in Egypt. Alexandria was rivaling Athens as an educational center, with a type of religious philosophy more advanced than any other part of Christendom could show, while the important archdiocese of Alexandria was rigidly conservative. If the atmosphere had been more favorable for free discussion, it is possible that the ideas of Arius might have been worked

over among the able scholars of that favored city until a conclusion acceptable to them all was reached.

It is interesting to note how another problem of far greater practical application was being worked out in this very manner, of free and open discussion, and at this same time. Various collections of the Christian writings had been made as the churches multiplied, including not only the books now in the New Testament, or most of them, but others also of pronounced spiritual character and some literary merit. It became desirable to formulate some rule or "canon" to determine just what books should be regarded as authoritative. The ablest scholars of the church recognized this need. There was an abundance of discussion and some controversy, but the issue was never forced by any kind of ecclesiastical action. No council was called. There was no gathering of bishops and presbyters to thresh out disputed points in acrimonious debate. There were no patched-up agreements to admit one book on condition that another one be kept out. When at last the consensus of opinion seemed

to warrant an authoritative statement of results and the question came before the Councils of Hippo (A. D. 393) and of Carthage (A. D. 397), it was found that the whole church was in substantial agreement. The question of the New Testament canon has never been reopened. No church heresy or division ever came up on this subject. A New Testament of twenty-six or of twenty-eight books has never been considered at all seriously since the fourth century in any part of Christendom. It required three centuries to settle this question, and every point was gone over again and again. A very widespread modern opinion exists that the inspired character of the genuine apostolic writings was so plain that there never was any difficulty from the beginning in deciding instantly between the true and the false. This is an utterly mistaken idea. The church had all kinds of difficulty. But it kept at the problem, patiently and carefully, year after year, until a satisfactory result was reached in a convincing and thoroughly satisfactory way.

Unfortunately the earliest of the great theological doctrines had a very different history.

And as a consequence, theology embarked upon a course of development that never can lead to any exact knowledge and indeed can have no result except to provoke further controversy. Theology, if it is anything, is the science of religion. And no fact of science can ever be established by popular vote or authoritative action of any kind. Theories to account for spiritual facts must be established and proved in exactly the same manner that has always been used to establish theories that account for facts in the world of nature. Now and then the sun is suddenly blotted out at midday. How do we account for it? By act of Congress? By summoning a council of scientific men? A wicked man has a change of heart that shows itself in every act, not only, but also in every impulse of his after life. That also is a fact. Nobody can question it when the results are exhibited. How do we account for it? We go away back in history, to a time when men believed that a demon swallowed the sun. We take their equally crude and unreasonable ideas of the science of religion, and we fight over them. We establish ecclesiastical

bodies, build and endow great schools, spend millions and millions of dollars, in proving that it was just the kind of demon that our forefather imagined, and by no means the similar kind that our neighbor's forefather dreamed of, that swallowed the sun, and only our kind of incantations and beating of pans can make him disgorge it. And in the meantime, for four hundred years, with the world only one fourth nominally Christian, the church has been marking time, without winning a single nation that was not Christian four centuries ago.

The controversy precipitated in Alexandria was not over a matter of religion at all. It had no bearing upon any question of Christian faith or manner of life. It was a purely philosophical inquiry into certain statements of Scripture, a search for the best opinion of the most competent scholarship of that age as to the question of the exact relations between Christ and the Father. The prevailing view, hardly yet definite enough to be called a doctrine, interpreted the Scriptures as mean-

ing that the historic Jesus was the incarnate Son of God, in the sense that the Logos or "Word" of the fourth Gospel was to be regarded as a preëxistent, uncreated, personal being, of the same divine substance as the Father and the Spirit. To the mind of Arius, this idea was incompatible with the attitude toward the Father that Jesus constantly showed. There is no reason to question the sincerity or the Christian spirit of Arius. He does not seem to have been a particularly controversial kind of man, though he was more fond of argument than he needed to be and was endowed by nature with positiveness of opinion.

Alexander, the learned and pious Archbishop of Alexandria, also had positive opinions. He was an able scholar, he had given much time and thought to this very problem, and the prevailing view was thoroughly satisfactory to him. He held a position of great responsibility, moreover, and was charged with the duty of keeping peace in the church. Alexandria already had an unenviable notoriety as a center of liberal thinking, and the Archbishop was

sensitive upon the subject. There were bats enough in the belfry now, without this new one. He summoned a council and silenced the offending presbyter by removing him from office.

The resulting "silence" was what we now call noise. In any other city this high-handed proceeding might have passed without notice, but Alexandria prided itself upon its progressive spirit. Friends of Arius took up the cudgel on his behalf. His writings began to be read in a wider circle than their own considerable merit would have secured for them in normal conditions. His not very novel view, that Christ could be worshiped as divine, and even as equal to the Father in the part that each takes in human redemption, without assuming mathematical equality at every point, became the common topic of conversation wherever theologians foregathered. Five years before this time or five years afterward it might have been possible to adjust these differences by the frank and orderly conference of scholars who had sufficient knowledge of the subject to carry on the discussion intelligently. Whatever of reasonable-

ness there was in the views of Arius might have been absorbed into the orthodox doctrine, softening some of its harsher features and thus advancing it one more step toward a complete and universal acceptability. And the unsoundness of other views that Arius held might have been demonstrated in a manner so satisfactory that he and his friends would unhesitatingly have abandoned them.

It so happened, however, that this purely academic question was suddenly shifted into an entirely different atmosphere. Events were taking place a thousand miles away, destined to exert a profound influence not only upon religious questions but upon the whole problem of human civilization. A great soldier had seen, or said he had, a cross in the sky, with an inscription pointing out the way to victory. He became the first Christian Emperor. The religion that had been despised and then tolerated now became an object of supreme importance among the great men of the earth. Ecclesiastical problems, hitherto the exclusive interest of churchmen, were now drawn into politics and came under the rules of state-

craft. In some way the case of Arius was brought to the attention of Constantine.

Among the unsolved problems of history we may include the question whether Constantine was a Christian at all, in any adequate sense of the term. Giving him the benefit of the doubt, and we must say that he shows up quite as well as some modern specimens whom we have known, his conviction is entirely reasonable that Christianity, being his religion, was now the religion of the Empire, and he was Pontifex Maximus of the new faith as his predecessors had been of the old. It was the fault of Constantine's Christian instructors rather than his own that he did not better understand the difference between Christianity and Roman heathenism. As soon as he could find the time, the Emperor turned his august attention to the tempest brewing in the Alexandrian tea-pot, and thereby lifted an inquiry that very few people outside of Egypt had ever heard of quite out of its local environment and made it a matter of imperial policy. Among many things that stand to Constantine's credit on the pages of history we should never

fail to notice the fact that before proceeding to official action he made a temperate and kindly effort to bring the parties in this dispute to a friendly adjustment of their misunderstandings.

Constantine could lead armies and rule states, but when it came to dealing with theologians he had many things to learn. One of them was the fact that a religious controversy, undertaken for the glory of God, has a remarkable facility for getting away from the main issue and running off at a tangent. Nobody who has had any experience in modern theological disputes and heresy trials will be surprised to learn that the question now under consideration was miles away from the original proposition of Arius. The whole controversy began in a philosophical inquiry as to the nature of Deity. But as the orthodox party now looked upon the matter, Arius had attacked the honor of Christ. He was trying to degrade the Saviour of mankind, who had led Constantine to victory, by taking away from him a part of his divine nature. Arius, after accepting the benefits of so great sacrifice, had

turned upon his Master like Judas, etc., etc. How familiar it all sounds! As one reads parts of this ancient history he really questions sometimes whether he is in the fourth or the twentieth century.

It is of course needless to say that no such ideas had ever entered the mind of Arius. The worst that can be said of him as to his own attitude toward Christ is that he regarded obedience as the greatest honor that can be paid to the second Person in the Trinity, without the necessity of going beyond the simplest and plainest meaning of the passages in Scripture that speak of his past and future glory.

It is exceedingly unfortunate that Constantine did not see another sign in the sky about this time, pointing out a better way than the one he actually chose. He was a soldier and a statesman, and he believed conscientiously in the strong arm of the law. Pontifex Maximus though he was, he modestly questioned his ability to decide a point like this, that seemed to have set the whole Christian church by the ears. He determined to summon a council of all the bishops in the Empire

and to submit to them the question of the nature and being of God.

This historic Council, destined to give a most unfortunate precedent for the disposal of subsequent theological disputes, met in the year 325 in the city of Nicea, near Constantinople. Arius was there to present his views, though he did not remain through all the sittings. The defense of the traditional position fell principally upon Athanasius, a brilliant and talented young deacon, also of Alexandria. Naturally the bishops, summoned by imperial edict, made the most of the occasion. People all over the Empire began to think of this discussion among theologians as the very gist of all Christian hope for mankind. To settle it at once, which to nine out of ten sincere Christians of course meant to support the orthodox position and thus to save the church from wreck, became the great question of the hour. It seemed to many as if the time had actually come when men could be made wise by edict, rather than by the tedious and not always successful method of cultivating their own brains. The question before the Council of Nicea was

exceedingly simple. It was to make a baby-doctrine into a man-doctrine in thirty days, in spite of the fact that the Almighty himself never has done this, and never tries to do it, in less than thirty years. They were summoned to decide a matter at once and for all the future, that no human intelligence in the world at that time, in the Council or outside of it, was sufficiently clarified to comprehend even if it had been perfectly explained.

It must be said for this famous Council that though all the forensic arts and policies were used, just as in other ancient assemblies, there was a very evident desire to be fair to both parties. The 318 bishops who sat out the debates seem to have been animated by a sincere purpose to decide the case before them strictly upon its merits and to be influenced as little as possible by the complications that had gathered around the original proposition. They hoped to be able to formulate a doctrine in such clear and definite terms that no other disturbance of this kind could ever come up in the future to mar the peace of the church.

This, unfortunately, is what no three hun-

dred bishops, or three millions of them, sitting in council, will ever be able to do. Doctrines that are never to be questioned are not made in any such way. One course was open to them that might have led to peace, but no one thought of it. They represented the best scholarship in the church at that time. If they had repudiated all claim to have authority to decide a question of this kind, and had sought a frank consensus of opinion that would have represented the best judgment of the year 325 on this subject, it is possible that the church even at that early period might have proved intelligent enough to accept their decision at least temporarily and to abide by their view without further controversy until more light was given. This, however, was not what the bishops were called together to do. They were summoned to Nicea to hear two opinions on the nature of Deity, neither of which was wholly true or wholly false. They were to decide by vote which of the two views was on the whole the nearer true, with the smaller measure of error. Then they must put that view forth, with the full authority of the church, as absolute and

perfect truth, not to be questioned forever. The bishops had a hard task. They deserve our sympathy rather than our criticism. We frankly admit that we are hardly wise enough ourselves to formulate such a doctrine in a satisfactory way.

The records are not quite clear as to the vote, whether thirteen, seventeen, or twenty-two of the bishops finally supported the Arian view. The one thing clearly evident is the fact that exactly the same result would have been registered, and by about the same majority, if each bishop had cast his vote before leaving home. And if the whole question before them could be reopened to-day and put to the vote of Christendom, it is very probable that the minority would still fall somewhere between the four and the seven per cent of the final vote at Nicea.

Even after this, there was still a chance for peace. The victory of the conservative party had been so complete that all danger of serious dissension on this subject might be considered at an end. Arius had had his day in court, such as it was, and even the marked preference

of the Emperor himself for his views had failed to stem the tide. There was no occasion to impose penalties, or to draw the line of exclusion with severity. Yet this is exactly what the Council did. They knew of only one way to secure a permanent peace, and that was the Roman fashion of not leaving enough survivors to start another insurrection. We should not blame the bishops for acting according to their light. We would do better to inquire whether, in such matters, we are not still living by their light rather than by our own. Whenever the human mind falls into a fear that sound truth cannot fight its own way in the world, but must be artificially shored up by authority lest error prove the stronger of the two, the same results will follow as followed the Council of Nicea. The Arians were hunted like wild beasts. Wars were fought over this question of the deity of Christ. And of course Arianism grew enormously. All other heresies, some of them already half forgotten, combined under this name, and in a few years Arius himself could not have recognized many of the doctrines that he was credited with. At sev-

eral times in the next few centuries it seems as if almost half of Christendom was Arian. Not until the last of the wars with the Arian Goths, in the seventh century, was this question finally quieted through the subjugation of the Arian part of Central and Southern Europe by the orthodox half.

The Council provided also for the preparation of a creedal statement, though the one that was formulated was afterward twice revised. In reality four creeds grew out of the discussions at Nicea; the Original Nicene Creed, the Revised Creed of the Council of Constantinople, the second revision by the Council of Chalcedon, and the so-called Athanasian Creed whose history cannot be accurately traced. It is a mistake to suppose that any of these is original, for they all copy the language of other less formal creeds that had been in use before the year 325. For many centuries every Christian in the world was expected to fit his reasoning powers, or his ability to believe without reasoning, into one or another of these historic statements of the common faith. Our present view of them may be

expressed in very general terms as a common agreement that they are historic documents of great value, marking definite stages in the evolution of theological opinion. It is not at all probable that we could improve them, for ours is not a creed-making age. They come a good deal nearer the truth than any sincere soul will ever need to come in order to be a thoroughly acceptable Christian believer. But they require an immense amount of interpretation in these modern days, far more than the Scriptures upon the same subjects have ever required or ever will.

The dozen centuries that lie between the Nicene Council and the Reformation cover the formative period of the modern European, Colonial, and American civilizations. The Greek-speaking and the Latin-speaking churches separated. After the fall of Rome the Western or Latin church entered the period called the Dark Ages, a time of great mental and moral deterioration. And yet it was a time of rapid and permanent growth. It is not a proposition that ministers in a pleasant way to the vanity of Christendom, but the

historic fact is the church never grew so rapidly and so permanently as it did in the two darkest moral periods of its history, at the close of the first century and in the years that followed the fall of the Roman Empire.

To understand this we must go back to the beginning. The church of the Apostles' days was small and weak. It suffered from persecutions, both Jewish and heathen, that culled out the unspiritual elements, leaving only the believers who had exceptional faith and courage. Under the stimulus of a new and striking experience, these first Christians developed a type of life that was wonderful in its consecration and power. But it was an abnormal condition of the church. The high-grade Christian is the very choicest treasure that humanity can show. A church made up exclusively of such would be a unit of incalculable possibilities for immediate service, and this is what many of those early churches were. But nothing can be plainer than the fact that no such organization was contemplated by the Master as the permanent working force in his kingdom. The real church of Christ is not

an exhibit of religious prodigies. It is a home where the sick and the imperfect and the undeveloped and the sinful all have their places. The essential qualification of a living church is not the high mental and spiritual average of its membership, any more than the essential feature of a home is the maturity and perfect health of all who dwell there. The greatest question that can be asked of a real church of Christ is the question what it is doing for those, at any stage in their Christian development, into whose lives it has brought the uplift and encouragement of a genuine Christian faith.

At first sight it might seem that there was a sad deterioration in real Christianity when we compare the enthusiastic and warm-hearted brotherhood of the Pentecost church, sharing their goods and breaking their holy bread in brotherly joy, with the seven churches in the Apocalypse. For many centuries we have been praising the former and apologizing for the latter variety of church life. Of course there may have been a real decline in this case, but there is nothing in the record to prove that it

was not a very long step upward. Led by the Spirit of God, the early Christians soon put it out of the power of the church to keep up the Pentecostal grade of moral and spiritual blamelessness. They realized that if the Master's command to evangelize the world was to be carried out, and the new convert, from such moral surroundings and influences as he had been subject to, was to be taken into fellowship and nurtured like the spiritual babe that he was, the church would be ruined as a dress-parade of the delectable Christian virtues. The very first steps they would take to obey their Master must necessarily put them into a condition toward which the scoffing world could point the finger of scorn. This result actually followed. It is the way the world judged the church in those days, and the world applies exactly the same kind of judgment to-day. So a human home is always ruined as a comfortable place of selfish ease when a baby is born there. Many people prefer a home without a baby, never having had one, and many churches are proud of their clean record and high-grade

membership. An exclusive church, made up of "the very best people" only, is a clear case of spiritual race suicide. It is an ecclesiastical steerage, filled with immigrants from other organizations that are alive.

There are worse things in church history than the crude moral character of the work they were doing in the Dark Ages. Rome had fallen. Such civilization as the world had known disappeared. Rank, wicked, and cruel heathenism was at the door, and out of it the church was to build the highest type of social, moral, and intellectual life that this world has ever seen. This task could not be done in a single generation. In fact, it is not completed yet, though something very substantial along that line has been accomplished. The church was full of false theologies and worldly ambitions. Its type of moral character was certainly very far indeed from the Christian ideals. But it believed that the first duty of the hour was to make Western Europe Christian. And it went at the task in a sensible and practical way.

We have not had occasion to trace out the development of the episcopal and papal forms of government from the second to the sixth century. From the Protestant point of view the military character of this government, particularly after the fall of Rome, was open to serious criticism. We have abundant historical proof of many evils that grew out of the arbitrary use of civil power for the advancement of religion. But when we try to imagine the church of the seventh and eighth centuries administered according to the pussy-foot policies imposed upon the average American clergyman by the elderly maiden saints of both sexes under his charge, the historian must turn aside and smile. They were doing a man's job in those days, and tender consciences could not always be considered. The sewing-circle was literally not in it. When the Nicene Council met, the Latin church was confined practically to its own part of the Empire, and only favored sections of that could be called Christian. Shortly after the close of the Dark Ages there was not a nation in Europe that was not evangelized almost, if not quite, up to the Roman

model. And no nation in any part of the world has been made Christian since. It is interesting to note that the missionary work done by the Arian heretics was of the same general character as that of the orthodox church. It seemed impossible to convince those people that they were ruining the reputation of the Nicene Council for inspired wisdom by acting so much like ordinary and properly certified Christians.

Like Peter and John at the gate, the church of those days had nothing to give in the way of a refined and enlightened religion, but such as it had it freely gave. It was a raw civilization that developed, but it had in it the seeds of modern Christianity. Some things were taught in the name of Christ that the religion of the twentieth century must repudiate. But some other things were taught that it might be well for modern Protestantism to think about. The rich and the poor met together. The high and the low had one place of assembly, one form of worship, one doctrine. The great cathedrals were not built for rich men and scholars to worship in, with a modest mission for poor folk

down the alley. The papacy was growing more and more arrogant, and the morals of the great religious houses will not bear close investigation. But no Christian was ever taught in those days that he was too good to worship side by side with any other Christian in the world.

Following the Dark Ages, the Renaissance, or Revival of Learning, extends to the time of the Reformation. It forms the closing part of the medieval period, separating the modern from the ancient world. The one feature of these four or five centuries that is of interest to us is the development of thought that is called Scholasticism. We may define it in the most general terms as the effort to reach intellectual certainty not by the modern scientific method, the tabulation of phenomena, but by study of the operations of the human mind. Material things were looked upon by the Schoolmen, or scholars of the period, with suspicion, as belonging to a world that is evil in its nature and is rapidly passing away. Many of the best thinkers of the period from the tenth to the sixteenth centuries seriously questioned whether there is any such thing as a

material universe, or whether all that our five senses perceive is not a creation of the intellect. This is a very old type of mental gymnastics, and probably will always serve as a foundation for queer religions. In the time of the medieval Schoolmen, however, it was almost a universal type of philosophy. The tendency of scholastic thought was toward a conviction that real and lasting truth cannot be built upon a foundation so uncertain and so insecure as things that are here to-day and gone to-morrow. We can know things only by the rules of logic, which cannot be changed and must be the same in the next world as they are in this world.

It is easy to perceive what kind of work this type of thinking would make when it came to the interpretation of Scripture. But it is not so easy for any one but a careful student of history to realize what a profound influence Scholasticism actually had in the development of human thought in the next three or four centuries. The honors, titles, and degrees in all our institutions of higher learning are purely scholastic, and based upon the idea of

privilege while the whole impulse of modern education is the search for power. We still present to the college graduate an ill-smelling sheepskin, purporting to give him admission to certain privileges of the learned that have not been in existence for centuries. The graduate himself would care nothing for the privileges, even if they could be secured, for his object in seeking an education is entirely practical. Modern learning is built upon scholastic foundations, but it has gone on growing until it has left the foundations out of sight.

Modern religion, however, is still living in the basement. It is all foundation, and nothing else. We are afraid to loose our hold upon the "fundamentals" of religion, to adopt the present phraseology, lest we lose our souls. All the historic creeds and the systems of faith that are built upon them, all our distinctly Christian types of thinking and teaching and literature, perpetuate the medieval thought, no matter how skilfully they may be clothed in modern words. Their ideas of certainty are entirely different from the ideas that we hold with respect to all other subjects in the world

except religion. Our conception of ordinary certainty is proof. Our conception of religious certainty is certification. When an Einstein arises and demands that we abolish the Newtonian theory of gravitation, we do not burn him at the stake; we do not even cast him out of presbytery or conference. We tell him to hire his hall, and we will come and listen as long as we can spare the time. But when a modern scholar suggests that our religion would be improved in this or that respect by a change of opinion, we call for the bishops to rise and crush him. He is endangering souls. We don't want to hear him. The simple truth is, fully half of our modern Christendom is actually afraid to consider his views at all.

This accounts for the fact that to so many people to-day, particularly to those of liberal education, the whole subject of religion has an air of unreality. Six days in the week they do their thinking by modern rules. We all use those rules, though we do not stop to reason them out. We admit that phenomena may be deceptive, but we have perfect trust in the laws that are behind the phenomena. We are not

surprised when we learn that the balloon rises by exactly the same law that makes the apple fall. And where the law that we have been believing fails to work, we demand that those whose business it is to look after such things shall give us a better law. We think we know a great deal in these days, but we hold all that we know subject to possible correction and improvement.

On Sunday these same people go to church and find themselves in a different world. It is not so much that they hear of creation in six days and of the sun standing still and of men a thousand years old or strong as elephants and of devils entering into swine. Intelligent people are not so seriously disturbed by these characteristic phenomena of ancient records as they are supposed to be. These things are dismissed as matters of psychology, hardly worth the trouble of forming theories about. Nor are these people perplexed at the occasional revival of controversy on such matters of science as were emphasized half a century or more ago, for they know that modern students of the natural sciences are no longer living in

the world of Darwin, Mill, Huxley, Tyndall, and other names that have had the honor of being pilloried in some ancient pulpits.

It is not the unusual or the miraculous or the unscientific matters in religious narrative that trouble the intelligent worshiper to-day, but rather the very sum and substance, the whole warp and woof of our current religious life. What is it all for? What is the church trying to do? Why does it carry so much unnecessary baggage, and keep unburied so many dead issues? No intelligent Christian now believes, with any seriousness at all, in the rigid historic lines that divide modern denominations from one another, filling our communities with a host of petty organizations, scarcely able in the general rivalry to keep going year after year, and certainly never going to be able to do the work that we all know belongs to the church of the Lord Jesus Christ in such times as these. This being the case, and everybody beyond the mental stage of a six-year-old child knowing it is the case, why do we keep it up? We can think of Samson, blinded by the Philistines and grinding in their mill. But

this new Samson has put out his own eyes in order to be permitted to grind in his enemies' mill, subject to their ill-bred derision.

The answer to these questions is very simple. Without denominationalism, no Christian has any right whatever to carry in his secret heart the flattering belief that he is a little wiser and better and nearer the truth than any other kind of Christian, or even than this publican. Moreover, without it no preacher of the gospel has even his present starvation assurance of a living, and no church in America can hold a foot of its property by law. Millions and millions of dollars are invested in schools, churches, newspapers, publishing-houses, absolutely dependent upon teaching some type of religious belief that in no case is held by more than five per cent of Christendom. The civil laws in most of our States are such as to put it in the power of a mere handful of people, by standing firmly together, to force these endowed religious institutions to keep on in their present exact type of teaching, even though nine tenths of the real scholarship in that denomination itself, and nine tenths also of the

people who are financially supporting it, no longer hold these ancient traditions.

That is the kind of strangle-hold that sectarianism has upon the church to-day. We shall have occasion to note, in the next chapter, how sectarianism obtained that hold. The Protestant Reformation is not the only occasion in the history of the church that called for courage and independence. We note here only the simple fact that this condition in the main grows out of the effort to conduct our religious life by medieval thinking, while we shape our ordinary and secular life by a different kind of thinking altogether.

There is an old and respectable theory, held still by many people in America, that hogs should be butchered in a certain phase of the moon, to make the bacon lie straight in the pan. Tell a modern farmer that, and if he has gone to school in these days he instantly asks "Why?" His thinking machinery turns instinctively to the question. But three centuries ago not one man in a hundred, not one educated man in ten, would have asked such a question at all. He would have taken the

fact for granted, because everybody thought that way, and in all his life he never had known hogs to be butchered in any other phase in the moon. The time was when it was easy to make people believe that there is somewhere above the sky a Deity who will condemn to eternal torment those who had a chance of knowing better but who persisted in believing the wrong doctrine about bishops or baptism or foreordination or free grace or ecstatic conversion or psalm-singing or a score of other equally important coruscations of religious philosophy. Did anybody ask, "Why?" Did anybody turn to the four Gospels, or the Epistles, to learn what they said about the kind of God we have? Certainly not. What is the use? Here are great churches, with thousands of the wisest men in their membership, and the king, perhaps, and the college president; and they all believe it. It was the medieval type of reasoning. We no longer use it except in religion.

The scholastic search for absolute truth did not distinguish between things that are essential and things that are non-essential, if they came equally under the laws of logical

thought. The time was, and not a great while ago, when the laws of most Christian nations provided the same death penalty for sheep-stealing as for murder. There were not enough of the severe penalties to go around. When a woman was burned alive at the stake in England only a little more than two centuries ago, for no other crime than the giving of food to a starving fugitive from Monmouth's army, it was possible for men to worship with all their hearts the kind of a God that our historical systems of theology describe, against whose wrath they issue their most serious warnings. If anybody had questioned the decision of Judge Jeffreys in the case of that woman, he would have been told by clergy and laity alike that it was unfortunate, of course, but really if crime like that is not severely punished the king's throne would be unsafe, and the liberties of England might be utterly destroyed. The throne of England and its liberties happen to rest upon a very different kind of basis in these modern days, but intelligent people are supposed to force their brains into the same old and outworn ways of thinking about God's

throne and Christian liberty. We are not advocating any doctrine of God that takes away a particle of his infinite justice, his hatred of evil and hypocrisy, or his established and immutable decrees that insure the penalties of all wrong-doing. No loyal Englishman would consent to-day to hold an allegiance to his king so weak as to make light of treason. But certainly no English king could hold his throne for an hour if he should permit what James II permitted in Judge Jeffreys's time.

The perplexing times through which we are passing just now bring this result at least, that they have set us to thinking in twentieth-century dimensions. The demand is thoroughly loyal to Scripture and reverent in spirit which insists on measuring religious truths according to relative importance, just as we measure all other truths and grade them into greater and less. The time is not ripe for a general exodus from creeds. It is a prudent rule not to jump until we have a little better idea than we can have just now where we are going to alight. But we certainly have advanced far enough in reasonable ideas of Christian truth to inquire

into the causes that have kept the church warring over creeds and idly witnessing gigantic wrongs for four of the best centuries that the world ever saw. Sane and reverent scholarship may not be ready, at the present moment, to formulate even the outline of a better organization of the church. But the fact that our present organizations are antiquated and hopelessly inadequate cannot be questioned by any one who lives outside the bounds of complacent bigotry.

THE CHURCH DIVIDED

The notion that recognition of certain dogmas is the essential condition of salvation lies at the bottom of all intolerance in matters of religion.

JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER.

The essence of our religion is peace and harmony. These can exist only where there are few dogmas, and each individual is left to form his own opinion on many matters.

ERASMUS.

The bloody hate of Christendom, for the amelioration of which human wisdom can find no means, which grows daily worse and worse, flows from no other source than the disunity of religion.

WLADISLAV, King of Poland, A. D. 1645.

I do not know which of the two opinions is the more unfounded: the Protestant view of a glorious Reformation upon which all our civil liberties are based, or the Catholic view of a wicked rebellion inspired by Satanic influences.

W. E. ORCHARD.

It is a most significant circumstance that no large society of which the tongue is not Teutonic has ever turned Protestant, and that wherever a language derived from that of ancient Rome is spoken, the religion of Rome to this day prevails.

T. B. MACAULAY.

Sometimes I venture to think we have lost Christ altogether. We believe in a church that can be manipulated by human wisdom. We believe in a church that can be galvanized by organization. But we do not believe in a church whose development is being overruled by the guiding spirit and eternal presence of Christ himself.

WILLIAM BOYD CARPENTER.

CHAPTER III

THE CHURCH DIVIDED

A VERY common error in the reading of history is to fall under slavery to dates. Because two events are separated by a considerable number of years, it does not always follow that a proportionate advance has been made in human affairs. The great movements that build up civilization usually go by impulses of widely differing intensities, and separated by periods of inaction or decline. The dozen years, for instance, between the work of John the Baptist and that of St. Paul actually made more history than the dozen centuries that followed the writing of the fourth Gospel. When the translators produced our Authorized English Bible in the year 1611 they were moving on the crest of a wave. A certain kind of Scripture study, by the minute and painstaking comparison of texts, was nearing its culmination. The present age is on the upward

trend of another wave, which we may best describe as the study of Scripture in perspective. It is the effort to get the point of view that the writer himself had when he produced his part of the sacred narrative. A great light has been thrown upon Scriptural times and methods of thought. Necessarily a large part of this research has been given to critical examination of former beliefs, and the grounds, or lack of grounds, that they stood upon. When it becomes distinctly constructive study, telling us less what it does not believe and more what it believes, we shall see a revival of interest in the sacred writings far beyond anything that the world has yet known. It may be that the time never will come when the English Parliament will be able to quote the language of Scripture so voluminously as it did in the days of Cromwell and Praise-God Barebones. But when our children and grandchildren quote Scripture they will know a good deal better what it means.

Because the Protestant Reformation came four centuries ago, many people think of it as about one fifth of the way back to the New

Testament. It would give a much clearer idea of conditions if we should call it four fifths of the way. It is only by an effort that we, in these strenuous days, can realize how little of actual progress had been made in religion since the New Testament times, fourteen centuries before, and how very ignorant and prejudiced the Reformers' religion really was. A romantic glamour has been thrown over those heroic days, obscuring the large part that personal conceit and half-way learning had to do in shaping the new ecclesiasticisms that grew up after the separation from Rome. Our admiration for the courage of the Reformers makes us a little blind to their faults, particularly to that very common failing among courageous people, contentiousness. They were human like ourselves, and the fact that they had the kind of convictions that put down abuses and inaugurated needed reforms does not mean that they had the necessary breadth of vision to construct iron-bound and perpetually authoritative theologies for another age and a very different condition of humanity four centuries later.

For two hundred years thoughtful men all over Central and Western Europe had been questioning whether the gigantic and elaborately organized Roman church was fitly representing the work of Jesus Christ for mankind. Corruptions of the most serious character had come in. The scandals that had culminated in the removal of the papal court from Italy to France, resulting in two rival popes, had set people to thinking along new lines. With our modern ideas of missionary work, we think we can see occasion for a large part of this decline in the fact that when the church had finally evangelized the last of the European peoples it lost its missionary zeal and turned to the political exploitation of the territory it had won. Possibly we over-magnify this missionary idea. Whatever the cause or causes may be, the outstanding fact in the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries was the great increase of the church in wealth and civil power, and its moral and spiritual decline.

"See, Thomas," said Pope Urban IV, as he was showing the papal treasures to Aquinas, "the church can no longer say with Peter

and John, 'Silver and gold have I none.' '' ''True, your Holiness,'' replied Thomas, ''and neither can she say any more to the lame man, 'Rise up and walk.' ''

In the year 1517 Martin Luther, an Augustinian monk, nailed upon the church-door in Wittenberg the famous Ninety-five Theses, that every one has heard of and very few have read. Even the most progressive thinkers in those days never thought of forming another church, but only of correcting certain objectionable features of the church that they had. The modern panacea for all religious grievances, to withdraw and set up a rival church across the street, had not been discovered. A few people here and there knew that there had been a division centuries before between the Greek and the Latin catholicisms, but not one in ten thousand had ever seen a Greek church or thought of Christianity as anything but purely papal. From the lower Danube to the Hebrides it would have been about as easy for the average Christian believer to form a mental picture of another Christ as of another church. The one thing more than all others

that shows the really revolutionary character of the movement inaugurated by Luther is the fact that within a single generation people did become accustomed to think of the church of Christ in less than world dimensions. No change that came in theology or church government or ideas of Scripture or ecclesiastical practice was so radical and so far-reaching as this one.

The pope, who had said of the church-door incident that it was only the prank of a drunken monk who would think better of it when he had slept himself sober, soon found that it was a more serious matter than that. A bull of excommunication was issued, which Luther publicly burned. The courageous Reformer was then summoned to an imperial diet at Worms and was afterwards kept in retirement for a time by one of his influential friends. As the church put forth its power, it became more and more evident what a hold the papacy had upon the mind and heart of Europe. Luther had seized upon the sale of indulgences by Tetzel as the basis of his first complaint. Rome soon put it out of his power to build upon a grievance

so readily compromised as that. And it became the easiest thing in the world to start friars and parish priests all over Europe to lamenting that this university professor, with the arrogance of a little learning, was endangering the souls of all who heard him by turning them away from their only chance of salvation through the ministries of Holy Church. It is the one appeal that can always be made successfully to the more contentious and aggressive types of ignorance. "Learning" is endangering souls to-day in just the same manner.

We cannot enter into a detailed history of the Reformation. Not since the days of the Apostles had events of such vital moment moved so rapidly or so far. But the changes that were made were in the external forms rather than in the vital spirit of religion. The purely papal doctrines which had been the chief causes of complaint were rejected, and a great many formal statements of belief were recast into language more in accord with current thought. But the ideals and principles of scholastic theology were kept practically un-

changed. In all that they regarded as really essential truth, the Reformers were very conservative. They made such changes as they felt were absolutely necessary, but there they stopped. No man can cut himself entirely loose from his own past, and especially from habits of thought formed in his own childhood. All things considered, the Reformers made an immense stride toward a more reasonable view of religion, but measured over against the advances made since that time, their religion was still very primitive indeed. A common idea of the Protestant Reformation, held by many people to-day, regards it as the complete overthrow of a corrupt perversion of Christianity, and the substitution of a new and perfect interpretation of the teachings of Christ and the Apostles, based upon the Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible. This is so plainly and palpably unhistorical that we should waste time trying to disprove it.

The forms of church organization were changed. Systems of church government that had not been in use for fifteen centuries, if they ever had been used at all, were loaded

upon certain passages of Scripture that groaned under their weight, and adopted. But the Reformers' ideas of what a church really is, how it obtains its authority, and what it can do for the believer in the way of insuring his final passage to the right place and not to the wrong one after he is dead, were not changed at all. In their preaching of the gospel, which was thoroughly zealous and sincere, the clergy of that time made use of the common religious convictions of their age. People who came into the various Protestant bodies, German, Swiss, French, Netherland or English, came in under the same appeals, for the same reasons, and cherishing the same hopes that the Reformers themselves had when they had come into the Roman churches in the days of their youth.

The study that we make of the Reformation period in its relation to modern problems falls naturally into three parts. The first is the Reformation idea of the relation between the individual believer and the church. This differed in no essential respect from the medieval Roman view, though it does differ quite materi-

ally from the modern view. The second is the change often referred to as the shift from an infallible church to an infallible Bible. This is a misleading statement, since both these ideas of infallibility are subsequent developments. The real change that was made was from the Roman idea of the church having an authority that was separate from, and in addition to, the authority of Scripture, to the Protestant idea of the church having only the authority to interpret Scripture. The third and last point we shall consider is the change that came—a real change this time—from the idea of a single, universal church, superior to all civil and political ties that bind men together, to the earlier idea that Rome had outgrown centuries before, of the church in close relationship to a single government.

The relation between the believer and the church is really the most important problem that the Reformers had before them, though it secured only the smallest part of their attention. For more than a thousand years Rome had been teaching that while salvation is a matter of divine mercy, and in the final analysis

of the case is secured through the sacrifice of Christ, the terms and conditions of bestowing that mercy are very rigidly laid down. They depend upon a certain mystic immunity or privilege that has been committed to the church. The authority to exercise this privilege, so the medieval theologians held, came originally through the Apostle Peter, to whom had been given the "power of the keys," the right to bind or to loose in the name of Christ. By the fortunate chance that Peter had become the first Bishop of Rome, this authority had remained, and would remain for all time, the exclusive possession of the Roman See. The Reformers disposed of this claim in various ways. The arguments most used ran along two lines. They denied that the power to bind and to loose was the exclusive possession of Peter but asserted that it belonged to the whole apostolic body, of which he was the spokesman. Some of the bolder Protestants went so far as to claim that this power belonged to the whole church, and not exclusively to the Apostles. The other line of argument was purely negative. There is no actual proof, certainly none

that was satisfactory to the Reformers, that Peter was the first Bishop of Rome. And whether he was or not, all the authority that he had was strictly personal and died with him.

This whole discussion of authority was a plain, though entirely unintentional, evasion of the main issue. The whole problem centers in the question what salvation really is. The idea of it that was held in those days, by Catholic and Protestant alike, and is still very generally held all over Christendom, regards salvation as nothing more than the desperate rescue, by any hook or crook whatever, from the pains and penalties of sin in a future life. Give the sixteenth-century Christian a reasonable assurance of that, and he asked for nothing else. *What* he was going to be, in that future life, never troubled him at all beside the supreme question *where* he was going to be. All Europe had been trained for centuries into a morbid fear of future punishment, heightened in its appeal to the imagination by every kind of crude scriptural and traditional imagery. The awakening of this fear was the sole de-

pendence of such evangelism as was undertaken, and formed almost the whole of the religious training of the young. Endless torture, which to them meant literal fire and brimstone, was the fate in store for the unshriven man. His only hope was to do what the church told him to do and to believe what the church told him to believe. Then the church would exercise the right given to it long ago, not only pronouncing the penitent absolved from eternal woes, but shortening also his time of temporary discipline in Purgatory.

Leaving out of this all reference to Purgatory, the Reformers held exactly the same view of salvation, as the rescue by a narrow margin from perdition, and practically the same view of the authority committed to the church. They talked a great deal about regeneration, sanctification, growth in grace, spiritual rebirth, and other theological catch-words, but when it came to preaching the gospel they were practical men, seeking results. Doctrines that have been implicitly believed for a thousand years have usually reached the point where the thousand years itself is the only argument that

is needed to keep them going. They were diligent readers of Scripture and knew that the teachings of Jesus were not of such character as to promote selfishness, even in seeking salvation. Whatever interpretation might be given to his words when separated into single sentences, there could be no question that his general teaching did not encourage his hearers to hope for an evasion of the consequences of their own wrong-doing by taking advantage of theological casuistry. No religious teacher in the world ever spoke more plainly of the penalties of sin, both in this life and in the next. But he was constantly trying to bring sinful men into right relations with God. The purification of the stream at its source, as set forth in his night conference with Nicodemus, was the hope that he held out to the world. He taught people a kind of doctrine that in many quarters to-day would be called perilously liberal. It was not stated categorically or theologically. But the general idea of future salvation that appears all through the Master's teachings was to encourage his hearers to believe that if their

hearts were right with God they could commit their future entirely to him, without insisting that he tell them beforehand just what was to be done to this or that kind of sinner, penitent or impenitent, in the endless existence beyond the grave.

The Reformers had not reached our modern ideas of the teachings of Christ as the culmination and practical replacement of the immature and incomplete religious concepts of former generations. They thought of the religion in the Bible as exactly the same thing from Genesis right through to Revelation. We think of it as a record of developing conceptions of God and of human duty. When Jesus said anything on these subjects, we think of his words as the final stage of thought. They take the place of what was imperfectly and incompletely, though not always mistakenly, said by the men of old time on those same subjects. But the Reformers looked upon the words of Jesus as triumphantly proving that everything previously said on the same subjects in the Old Testament was absolutely complete and in-

fallible truth. They knew of only one kind of inspired knowledge, and it was perfect and complete at every stage.

Of course the Reformers, and the Puritans after them, thought of the Old Testament revelation as an incomplete religion, in the sense that people then were waiting for the promised Messiah. But the people in the Old Testament were looking for Messiah very much as all types of adventism for the past dozen centuries have been looking for his second coming, not to teach anything new but merely to fulfil in absolute literalness what had been taught before. That was the mistake that the Jews made in the time of Christ. He did not fulfil the conditions. He taught so many things that were entirely new and unheard of that they rejected him as the expected Messiah and crucified him.

No one who reads Reformation and Puritan theology with any kind of discrimination can question that its position on this belief in Old Testament religion, as a perfect faith waiting only for Messiah to come, was practically that of the first-century Jews. Of course the Reformers did not question the authority of

Christ. But more people than Pontius Pilate have looked upon his statement that his kingdom is not of this world, and is not to be advanced by the policies of this world, as a beautiful but impractical idealism. The Reformers and the Puritans used the words of Christ freely for the comforting of saints. But when it came to rousing sinners, they usually went elsewhere for their texts. What they wanted was thrill, and they found it in the Pentateuch and the Prophets. They used the Old Testament not as we do, as a rich storehouse of fundamental religious concepts applied to human lives in practical ways, but as a rigid and bloody scheme of human salvation by sacrifice, perfect and perpetually obligatory because given by divine inspiration.

In a word, the leaders in the Reformation, both in the time of Luther and later, and the great divines of the Puritan movement afterward, taught and practised a kind of religion, in all earnestness and sincerity, that can scarcely be distinguished from the kind that had been taught and practised before Christ came into the world. It was "scriptural" be-

yond all question, for every part of it is in Scripture with lurid plainness. It was an excellent and successful religion of the pre-Christian type, but it was not Christian. Though they used the name of Christ and gave him all reverence and worship as the bringer of an effective atonement, there was so little of his actual teaching in their religion that we can distinguish it only with considerable difficulty from the religion of the Scribes and Pharisees. It encouraged people to believe that they were saved, and even to believe that they were rather exceptional saints, while their hearts were very far indeed from what God requires. And it filled their churches with a very pious, very selfish, and very self-satisfied people, who deserve our pity rather than our censure for the evident sincerity of their confidence that their spiritual condition was all that such a God as they believed in could ever ask for.

This, in its naked ugliness, is the actual outworking of certain ideas of religion that in our modern days, just as in any other age, produce the same result. It is the measuring of faith

by its zeal for orthodoxy rather than by the Christlikeness of its effect. Such ideas of religion may be, and indeed from our own observation we should say they usually are, the result of earnest and most serious concern for the good of human souls. But beyond any possible question, the witchcraft delusion of our early New England forefathers originated in the same ignorant and zealous concern for the spiritual good of their neighbors and friends. There is no obligation to sustain or to apologize for bigotry because the ghosts that it raises are very real to itself.

The whole problem of certain pronounced types of hard and cruel religion that have been handed down to us from Reformation and post-Reformation times, bolstered up by scriptural authority, comes down in the final analysis to this simple question: When Christ came into the world, did he really have anything new to teach, or must we regard his teaching as the mere echo and perfect confirmation of every previous teaching that had been given by a complete, inerrant, and final revelation from God? It does not help the case at all to say that the

things taught in the Old Testament were perfect and inerrant so far as they went, but that they needed the atonement, to be furnished by the expected Messiah, in order to make them complete. For in that case, it is impossible to understand why the Messiah, when he did come, did not provide the atonement at once, and so fulfil and complete these religious conceptions of the previous two thousand years. Why was he continually teaching a religion of his own, so distinctly his own that even his disciples could not recognize it as what they had been accustomed to? Why did he insist upon giving to the world new ideas of God that no man had ever thought of before, if the ideas of God that they already had were perfect and faultless? Why give another religion to the world, which already has an Old Testament full of them, all divine, all inerrant, all needing nothing but the single item of a fulfilled prophecy of Messiah to make them complete?

We have gone into this subject in some detail in order to make clear the Reformers' doctrine of the relation of the believer to the

church. We may consider first the idea that the New Testament Christians held on this subject. In the second chapter of the Book of the Acts, forty-seventh verse, descriptive of the first Christian church, it is said that the Lord was adding together day by day those who were being saved. Too much of doctrinal significance should not be attached to a statement of a purely narrative character, but this sentence can hardly mean less than that these people, having consciously come into a personal relationship to Christ, thought of themselves as also in a definite and vitally organized relationship with all other believers. It was the Lord that added them together, rather than the church that reached out and took them in. Actual and visible relationship to all others who were seeking to serve Christ was a part of their own relationship to him, and could not be repudiated without at the same time repudiating Christ himself. One was their Master, even Christ, and all they were brethren. Therefore they must live as Christians should live, not only with a few brethren whom they liked, but with all brethren.

Whatever interpretation we may give to these words, they are a long way indeed from the medieval idea of running into the church in order to be saved; as one ran, for instance, into an ancient city of refuge to escape the avenger of blood. The Reformers inherited directly from Rome their idea of salvation as a covenant or bargain. It fits in exactly with the Roman idea of the church as the exclusive possessor of special privileges, secured somewhat fortuitously through the Apostle Peter. The Reformers multiplied Peter by eleven, and got the same answer. God had made certain promises in days of old, chiefly through the prophets. Their idea was that Christ came to fulfil those promises, but not to change the conditions. He was simply the victim, provided for the sacrifice. Salvation is to be secured by holding God to his word, pleading his promises as though he is trying to break away from them, tying him up, hand and foot, by every chance word that he has let slip from Genesis to Revelation, and weaving them all into a grand total that no self-respecting Deity can possibly repudiate on the Judgment Day.

It is a part of the old, hard, legalized idea of religion that we have inherited from a coarse and cruel past that is not many years away. It is an idea that is in the Scriptures, to be sure, for the Scriptures also had their coarse and cruel past, in the time of the Judges, for instance, and their present in the time of Christ. The Children of Israel did have cities of refuge. But they abandoned them as soon as they could provide better police regulations. There are types of modern evangelism that still live in the Book of Joshua, and cannot get away from the idea of salvation by sanctuary. Thousands of people have listened to the preaching of the gospel all their lives without being able to distinguish between salvation by being something and salvation by getting somewhere. They still make the Church of Christ a city of refuge, a conception that Israel itself had abandoned a dozen centuries before Christ came.

There is an ark in ancient tradition, floating above a waste of water and landing safe at last. Very remotely it may suggest, in a figurative way, the escape of the righteous from the doom of the wicked. It was a favorite

theme of searching evangelism in the days when most of our creeds were formulated. The world is going to destruction, and the church has been provided for those who have foresight and self-interest enough to come in out of the storm. Their salvation is not a matter of any change in themselves or vital relationship with the divine or any other Christian teaching, but solely the believing of something so unusual that the world refuses to believe it; though it must be confessed it is a little difficult for our modern minds to perceive what difference it would have made to the wicked, no matter what they did or what they believed, for there was no room for them in the ark, it was not built for them, and it was God's purpose to destroy the wicked anyway. We may grant the earnestness with which warnings of impending destruction were held out to those who needed them, in preaching the ark-idea of the church, but what a terrible conception of God the original story itself presents, to say nothing of the use that has been made of it! And what an utterly grotesque picture it makes to attach the idea of the

church to this ancient story in any homiletical way whatsoever!

Over against this contract idea of church membership, we may consider the radical difference in atmosphere when we come to the teachings of Christ. The wonderful parables that he used, not claiming any historical truth at the basis of them though there may have been, all run along the same line as his positive teachings of dogma. We may take a vivid story, from the summit of revelation and not from its remote beginnings, that bears with precision upon this very subject of relationship between believers, which is exactly the same, in the Christian teaching, as the relation of the believer to the church. An elder son has a younger brother, whom he did not ask for and is in no sense responsible for. He is just his brother, by accident of birth, and neither of them can help or avoid the relationship. Having the same parents, they must be brothers, a fixed and permanent condition. It is a very human situation in this prosperous and joyless household. There is virtue without affection, service without joy, strict dis-

charge of all duties except the one that is more obligatory than all others, a life of rigid uprightness, producing the hard and unlovely kind of character that we all are unfortunately familiar with. The younger son also has his faults, and they are serious. He is fickle, shallow-minded, self-indulgent, conceited, almost everything that is disagreeable. Our Lord is not seeking an abnormally beautiful setting for his narrative. He knows what is in man. He is under no illusion as to what his churches are going to be. He came to save a world that needs saving. He is picturing before us a real household.

The father occupies about the same position in his own house that God holds in most of his churches. Years ago he could keep the peace by authority but the sons are grown now, and authority only widens the breach that lack of principle and lack of mutual consideration has made. The younger son makes a foolish request that is almost a demand. The father certainly must have known what a risk it was to send a young man like that, with money in his purse, away from home. But the case is

hopeless anyway. As the event proved, fatherly love after all did make a wiser choice than all the wisdom in the world could have done. But the father has a fine sense of justice. He gives to the elder son his portion also, the double portion, though he has not asked for it. And he retains for himself his actual living and the limited authority about the house that the law provided.

The young man gathers all together, loses his head completely in his newly found freedom, goes into the far country, and returns impoverished and disgraced. But he is not the same young man who went away. He has put away his pride. He has lost his quarrelsome disposition. He can be lived with now, in some kind of comfort. He has come to himself. The joy of his return is marred by one incident which is the chief part of the story, though it is often put into a secondary place.

A double obligation rested upon the elder son to make his brother welcome. There is first the tie of relationship, which is a changeless condition, not dependent upon circumstances nor even upon character. Certainly there was

an obligation resting upon this young man, because of his relationship, at least to inquire into the circumstances of his brother's return, even if it were no more than the effort to learn the cause of such a remarkable outburst of enthusiasm in a household like theirs.

Then, in addition to this fact of natural relationship, there is the further obligation that every shekel this elder brother owned in the world he owed to his younger brother, whose impatience had secured for him the division of the estate before such a division was due. He had lost nothing, for all that the prodigal had spent was his own. He had gained an estate, and he had gained a brother. The younger man had come to himself—the greatest fact in the parable. This change alone was worth to the family infinitely more than all the money that it had cost. If this had been anything but a Christian story we might naturally think of the inevitable consequences of a sinful life, even after contrition and reform. It is the peculiarity of the religion of which this story is a part, however, that it teaches always and everywhere the possibility of a re-created life,

an actual birth from above into a newness that carries no stain from the old, when the old is really put away, and furnishes an infinite vitality that puts aside the laws of nature and their penalties. This is miracle, real miracle. Into this wonderful story there has come the mystery of a changed heart. The whole significance of the parable turns upon this fact. The father was not using a figure of speech so much as setting forth a truth like the one told to Nicodemus when he said, "This, thy brother, was dead and is alive again." For the first time in his life, at least since they were children together, this young man has a real brother. There now is the possibility of a home life that will make his flocks and herds and lands and bond-servants seem to be nothing at all by comparison. The younger brother by asking for his portion of goods had made the elder brother rich, but the swine-field in the far country had made him incalculably richer, if he only knew it. When a man comes to himself—is genuinely converted—the whole world is made so rich that it overflows in all directions, and every other man can have a share.

We read of a certain rich young man in Perea who had a chance for investment far beyond anything that has ever been furnished before or since, and he threw it away. It is a rather striking parallel here, just outside the circle of light and music and feasting. The father, coming out to entreat his son to be rich, to forsake what is worthless for what is of infinite value, to keep all that he has that is worth keeping and to get everything else, is a picture of the tragedy of the modern church. We don't know the value of brotherhood. We refuse to be entreated. We don't like music and dancing for such cause. We would rather stay out in the dark, nursing our own aggrieved and outraged theology.

By every system of measurement this is the greatest parable of human nature that ever was spoken. To say nothing of his marvelous spiritual insight, our Lord had the natural gift of story-telling in a remarkable degree. His characters are always true to themselves. This elder brother is plainly a dull fellow at the best, and he remains utterly stupid to the last, but such imagination as he has runs along

one narrow and very persistent line. He also has longed all his life for riotous living, of an inexpensive kind and with the minimum of risk, but riotous nevertheless, according to his standard. It is the only joyous life he is able to think of. Even now, rich as he is, with flocks and herds of his own and with no need to ask any one for a kid, he cannot get over the fact that for a long time he never had been given the means of merrymaking with his friends. He begrudges the one fatted calf that has been requisitioned to celebrate the family joy. He is the victim of the very saddest misfortune that can overtake a man in the world, in that he is unable to forget a grievance after it is entirely past. Riches do not make people generous. Spiritual privileges do not make them Christlike. And thanking God that we have not devoured our living with harlots, if this young man really did so, does not change the condition that, so long as that kind of life is our highest idea of pleasure, by our Lord's interpretation of the commandments we ourselves have to all intents and purposes committed the very same sin.

All the religious teachers, reformers and geniuses in the world could not put the lancet into the sore spot of modern Christianity with more disconcerting accuracy than is done by this wonderful parable, nineteen centuries old. Lack of brotherly kindness is the one and only trouble of the church. God furnishes everything else, but we must furnish that. If we were brethren in fact as we are in name, we could throw every other doctrine that we have to the winds and still be theologically rich, or we could invent new and startling doctrines every hour and never be troubled by heresy. And the most wonderful thing of all about brotherly kindness is that it never costs anything, no matter what sacrifices it may entail for the time being, for the gain is always more than the price that is paid.

The whole New Testament idea of the church is that of a family, and never of a covenant or bargain or escape or refuge. Those partial conceptions came up in olden time, and through them the Hebrew people developed their ideas of God's mercy up to a point where Jesus could take them and use them as a foundation for a

nobler conception of God and of man. When Israel was a child he thought as a child. When the fulness of time had come, the spiritual Israel put away childish things. We cannot gather a few congenial Christians together whose type of religious prejudice is most like our own, and form ourselves into a church. Of course we can name the club that is thus formed a church, but it is n't one. Churches are born, not made. We cannot even select the church that we propose to honor with our membership. God does the selecting, by causing sons and daughters to be born into his kingdom. Then the question comes home to us whether we will permit the Lord to join us with them, in the good old way of the second chapter in the Acts, or will do our own joining, with congenial Christians exclusively, in the way of the past four centuries. And when a grievance arises we are not privileged to withdraw in dudgeon and join a rival church down street. That is not building up the kingdom of God. It is changing religious boarding-houses. People who do that have no church home, and never will have.

Of course we may find ourselves in a so-called religious fellowship that is no church at all, and this is all too often the unfortunate condition that we have inherited from the past. Which brings us to the second of the three features of the Reformation problems under consideration, the change that was made from the Roman to the Protestant idea of authority. Speaking in the most general terms, Rome held that authority comes from two sources, the Scriptures and the church. The Protestants held that authority comes from Scripture alone. Practically the difference between them is this: Rome held the view that no Scripture is authoritative for the believer until it has been interpreted for him by the church. The Protestants held the view that the Scripture itself is the only authority, and that the believer must do his own interpreting. But he must be very careful to interpret the inspired Word exactly as his own sect of Protestantism demands. It must be confesed that to the average intelligence this distinction hardly seems vital enough to go to war over, but no historian can question the large place it has occupied and

the evil results it has produced in the past four centuries.

It is one thing to go to the Bible with unbiased mind and to make up a scheme of theology entirely from Scripture. Possibly some people did this eighteen centuries ago. Certainly nobody did it four centuries ago. The theologies of the Reformation period and later came chiefly through tradition. The Protestants did make changes in their creeds, but beyond rejecting certain Roman dogmas the changes were not very great. They used the Bible diligently and reverently, but they made of it mainly a storehouse of proof-texts for things that they already believed. One of the joys that some of us look forward to in a future life is the fact that we shall have the chance of hearing what St. Paul has to say on the use that has been made of some of his texts.

It is interesting and rather amusing to read Luther's vigorous denunciations of "scholasticism," by which term he means worldly philosophy as distinguished from Scripture. For Luther's theology is scholastic, through and through, with many pronounced advances,

of course, and a fair amount of independent thinking. John Calvin was the first of the greater Reformers to go back of the time of the medieval Schoolmen for his doctrinal views. He obtained most of his system from Augustine, in the fourth and fifth centuries, as he claimed to do. But inasmuch as the Schoolmen themselves obtained their theologies mainly from Augustine, the difference is not very great after all. In the use of proof-texts to support his elaborate and logical dogmas, Calvin stands supreme among other geniuses in that line. What he cannot prove from Scripture is hardly worth considering.

When it came to devising systems of church organization and government, however, the Reformers exhibited more originality and much less divergence of opinion. It was possible for them to come nearer together on this subject than in matters of abstract theology. Protestant sects to-day are numbered by the hundreds, but systems of church government fall into three classes only, the Episcopal, the Presbyterian, and the Congregational or In-

dependent. Without entering into detail, we may state the chief differences among them as follows:

In the Episcopal system, which is nearest like the papal both in form and in history, the rule is vested principally in the episcopus or bishop, and the clergy are divided into orders, each with its definite function and authority. There can be no question that the churches of the second century and later were organized under bishops, a fact usually referred to by the name "Historic Episcopate." In this system bishops are regarded as the official successors of the Apostles, clothed with their original authority over the churches.

In the Presbyterian system the chief authority is in the presbyters, or elders, and the clergy are not graded into orders. Presbyterian theologians usually hold that the New Testament offices of bishop and elder were essentially the same, and that the Apostles had no official successors. Local Presbyterian churches are grouped into geographic units, usually called presbyteries, and these into larger units called

synods and assemblies. They have a certain well-defined authority over the individual churches and clergy.

In the Congregational system the authority is in the local congregation, which is organized and administered much like the local Presbyterian church, though more flexible and democratic. Groupings of local churches in larger or smaller numbers are of an advisory character. General supervision both in doctrinal and temporal matters is carried on by extending or withholding fellowship and not by definite authority. Variations of these three systems exist in Methodist and other Protestant bodies.

There has been about as much controversy over systems of church government as there has been in questions of religious belief. About as many wars have been fought to prove that Episcopacy or Presbyterianism or Independency is the one and only New Testament form as to prove anything else, and they have proved it fully as well. To go over the history of church governments would be merely to repeat the wearisome details of conceited scholar-

ship, stubborn conviction and ignorant vituperation, practically the same as we find in the history of dissension over abstract theological doctrines.

We turn briefly to the last of the three features of religious thought in the Reformation period that bear upon modern problems, the division into sects. These, however, were not like our modern denominations but were racial and national bodies, each one organically connected with the civil government of the country in which it was situated. A national church, supported by general taxation and administered by secular authority, is not a great advance over the old pagan idea of a national god. Of course if the Reformers had really obtained their religious ideas from the New Testament alone, as they are nowadays supposed to have done, this form of organization could not have appeared. If there is any one subject on earth that is not in the New Testament, or even a hint of it in any possible form, that subject is a state church. But we should remember that the conditions were quite different from those of the first Christian cen-

tury. The New Testament Christians lived in a pagan civilization that was hostile in a sense, but not nearly so hostile as the papal environment of the Reformers. Practically the Apostles carried on their work in the same condition that the Jews had lived under for centuries. They had no assurance of protection in their worship, and opposition was liable to develop at any time, but for the most part they were left alone, in practical independence.

With the early Protestants the situation was entirely different. The papal church had no intention of permitting freedom of worship, and behind it stood the whole armed force of Europe. When the Emperor summoned Luther to meet the Diet at Worms he was acting as the puppet of Rome. One of the very first necessities confronting the Reformers was to gain enough politically influential friends to protect them against the papal power. This necessity exposed them to all the evils of allying religion with secular politics, but there was no help for it at the time. We are very unjust to the Protestant leaders in different localities if we criticize them for proceeding

along the only way that seemed to be open. Their separation from one another at the beginning was not from any jealousy or suspicion or lack of brotherly interest, but was the outgrowth of a natural effort on the part of each group for self-protection. Germans, Swiss, French, and Netherlanders turned to their own governments rather than to other Protestants. The general revolt against Rome in its earlier stages was too weak and uncertain to count upon when opposed by the mighty power of the papacy.

Within a few years, however, the Protestant movement had become so firmly established in several of the stronger nations that a practical union of Protestantism might have been formed, if they had gone about the task in the right way. Advances were made in this direction, but in a very timid and hesitating manner. It would not be easy to tell just where the blame lies for not completing a work so desirable, but a careful study of this perplexing subject would indicate that the jealousies and suspicions which prevented a practical union of Protestant forces were rather

among states and peoples than among churches. Protestantism itself was a tentative movement. In its four centuries of existence it never has exhibited the marks of a constructive policy. It is not characterized by accomplishment but by continuous preparation; not doing something so much as getting ready to do something. This being the case, it has not mattered a great deal, after all, just what shifting and temporary forms the different Protestant bodies have assumed. The serious consideration just now is that the state of ignorance and undevelopment, which enabled a divided Potestantism to do its work after a fashion and with some success for so many years, has passed out of existence. The present century needs a religion as far in advance of divided Protestantism as the sixteenth century needed one in advance of medieval Romanism.

Men of science whose opinions we are bound to respect, however much we may regret that the facts of history they discover could not have been a little more flattering, tell us that at a certain remote period our ancestors were obliged to leave the earth, where they had been

dwelling, and for a time to live in the trees. Some geological or climatic change had greatly multiplied the evil beasts and reptiles, and man was unable to combat them successfully. Evidences of this period, in embryology and anatomy, still remain, so clear that they are hardly subjects for questioning. The interesting part of the record seems to be that it was not the dying out of the beasts and reptiles but the growing ability of mankind, forced upon them because of their limited quarters in the tree-tops, to use hands and weapons and to work together, that gave to primitive man the kind of possession and control over the earth that modern man now has. Which things, as St. Paul would say, are an allegory. Evil conditions forced our good Protestant forefathers into the theological tree-tops. We have had to live and think and worship in these limited quarters where we were born, but we are outgrowing them. We are learning how to forge our spiritual weapons and to work together in harmony, so as to take possession of the world and to make the kingdoms of it the kingdoms of our Lord and of this Christ.

The Reformation developed rapidly but it soon reached its full stature. Where it stopped nearly four centuries ago it is still standing. The boundary lines in Europe between Catholic and Protestant have scarcely shifted a mile since the death of Luther. Later Protestantism spent its force in still further subdividing and in battling over opinions. We regard the whole movement as preparatory, and give it all praise for what it has done. It has opened the Scriptures for us so widely that we can see the failings of Protestantism itself with painful distinctness. It has cultivated a spirit of religious liberty that now revolts against bigotry as it once revolted against prelacy. The Reformers made their mistakes. We also will make ours. But we can at least avoid the very greatest of all blunders, trying in present conditions to remain where we are. The old movement is dead. It has had its day, and a noble day it was. Conditions have changed, certainly in this respect at least, that human minds to-day cannot be forced into the ways of thinking that satisfied our forefathers, nor can we tolerate many things in our religion

that did not hurt or shock the best people in the world only a few years ago. We firmly believe that if we of the present age are as willing to be led as the Reformers were, into a future that surly is no more hazardous and uncertain than theirs was and has infinitely greater promise, we also can count upon the same divine assistance. And if it shall please God to lay this duty upon our generation, we hope and pray that we may be as willing to undertake and as courageous to discharge our obligation as they were to take up and to go through with theirs.

THE CHURCH EXPECTANT

In these days that are passing over us, even fools are arrested to ask the meaning of them.

THOMAS CARLYLE.

The Christian is not merely a man who does certain things. He is a man who does all things from a certain motive and in a certain spirit.

ANDREW GILLIES.

Therefore I beg of you all, in the name of God and of our neglected youth, not to think of this subject lightly. For the right instruction of youth is a matter in which Christ and all the world are concerned.

MARTIN LUTHER.

The Message of the age to a divided church is this: The day of rival denominations is past. Unity must come, unless the church is to die. The rampant denominationalist is as far behind the times as is the extreme individualist in society or the anarchist in government.

TERTIUS VAN DYKE.

There is no greater delusion than to suppose that the modern man is repelled from religious observances by what he is required to believe. Experience compels me to affirm that it is not the difficulty of squaring Christianity with modern science that is in question, but rather the difficulty of squaring its ethical precepts with the requirements of industrial and commercial practice.

R. J. CAMPBELL.

We are challenged by this war to a renovation of our popular Christianity, to a deep and unrelenting detestation of the little bigotries and obscurantisms that so curse our churches, to a full and intelligent expression of vital fellowship with God. Unless we can answer that challenge, there is little use of our trying to answer any other. We must have a great religion to meet a great need. The saddest aspect of Christian history is the misrepresentation of Christ and the spoiling of his influence, not by irreligious men but by the official exponents of religion.

HARRY EMERSON FOSDICK.

CHAPTER IV

THE CHURCH EXPECTANT

IN previous chapters we have gone over certain events in ecclesiastical history that bear most directly upon the problems now confronting the Christian church. Our object has been to present each incident in its true historic perspective, so far as the information that we now have makes this possible. We have traced out the principal traditions upon which modern Christianity is built, not in a fault-finding spirit nor in the effort to sustain or to apologize for any condition that now exists. We hold no brief for advancing any special brand of Christianity. We are simply trying to distinguish the real historic church from the imaginary kind that many good people still think they have. We present in this chapter, with equal brevity, a few of these modern problems. For the sake of additional clearness we

find it necessary to go over again, on parallel lines, some of the subjects we have already considered.

The Christian church is nearly two thousand years old. It has outlived three distinct civilizations, the ancient, the imperial, and the feudal. It has a composite character. It is based upon certain historic facts that are firmly established, and upon certain moral and religious principles that cannot be disputed. They never have been changed, and never will be changed so long as the world endures. Stated as some of these principles are, in the Sermon on the Mount, for example, they may be perplexing to us, but we never question that they are true. We can imagine conditions where it might be impolitic and apparently useless to turn the second cheek to the smiter, to give the cloak to one who by litigation has taken our coat, to go voluntarily a second mile with him who by force has compelled us to go one mile only. But, recognizing of course that these are figures of speech to set forth a certain kindly spirit in which we should deal with unjust men, nobody can ques-

tion that such a spirit is right. Nor can any one question that real peace and human happiness are never going to come to this world of ours in any other way. Any religion can tell us how to deal with people who want to deal rightly. Only Christ has ever told us how to deal with those who have not dealt rightly, and have not wanted to deal rightly, with us. His teachings search out the depths of human experience. Upon them, and upon them only, can a perfect condition of mankind ever be built.

But when it comes to the application of these principles in our own lives, we run into the problems that have given to historic Christianity its composite character. Duty almost never presents itself to us in one clear and unmistakable attitude. It is opposed by other duties quite as often as it is opposed by positive evils. We recognize the claim that the widows and the orphans have upon us. But when the opportunity comes to go after the man or the institution or the condition of society that made them widows and orphans, the greater duty may make it obligatory to neglect the smaller.

In many things indeed the historic church has utterly failed. On many occasions it has fallen so far short of its opportunities as to make its sacred mission a mockery. It has been dominated by worldly policies and selfish ambitions. It has had to be brought back to its duties again and again by spasmodic reforms. In the passing years it has accumulated a great many things that are not even remotely Christian in their origin, though they are accepted and believed and contended for to-day by a considerable part of Christendom. And it has lost many things that the early Christians fully believed to be essential parts of their religion.

Some of these lost doctrines were simply misunderstandings that ran their course, expectations that failed to materialize. The most conspicuous example is the transfer to Christianity of the Hebrew misconception of the coming of Messiah in power and glory to establish a kingdom by force. The early Christians could not make this expectation fit the actual coming of Jesus, with his teaching of a spiritual kingdom and his utter repudiation of the conquest of the world by external author-

ity of any kind. So they transferred the idea to a second coming, based upon certain misunderstood statements of his, and confidently looked for within their lifetime. When nothing of the kind occurred, and the expectation itself began to work unmanageable confusion, the great majority of Christians dropped the scheme from their system of teaching and of labor. But the record of it is in the New Testament, and every great cataclysm in human affairs has furnished occasion, hundreds and hundreds of times, for a revival among restless and erratic believers of these long-ago abandoned apocalyptic hopes and visions.

Another kind of New Testament teaching that ran its natural course dealt with local and Oriental customs, ideas of propriety and habits of thought. Among these may be mentioned the position of women in the churches, the popular superstitions as to disease, demoniac possessions, dreams, visions, ecstasies of a supposedly spiritual character, including the gift of tongues, and other phenomena. These were real and serious problems to the writers of the New Testament. We deal with

them reverently, of course, but necessarily from our own point of view. They conscientiously believed that women are spiritually inferior to men. The modern male has had that idea beaten out of him long ago. They looked up to some kinds of prayer-meeting brethren as spiritually possessed, whom we regard, frankly and flatly, as religious nuisances.

Still a third kind of lost doctrine is much more serious. The early Christians found some of the Master's teachings very difficult to carry out, and they quietly threw them overboard. A large part of the Sermon on the Mount, as they understood it, met this fate. Along some lines, the early and the medieval Christians were capable of great self-sacrifice. Most people are, if they can be convinced of the rewards that such sacrifice can be guaranteed to bring. They could give up marriage for their religion without a qualm. Millions of people do the same to-day, to secure their own selfish ease or financial independence. They could leave the world and go into the desert to escape temptation or to secure opportunity for pious reflection. But the worldly

life has its disappointments, even in these days, and considering the greater hardships of their lot, the desert, the monastery, and the convent had their attractions for tired, worried, hopeless, and war-wearied humanity. It must be confessed that many of the virtues attributed with pious reverence to the great Christian saints of old seem to us much like foolishness. Our work would be far easier to-day if some of them, instead of seeking fantastic ways of exhibiting saintliness, had turned their attention to carrying out the simple precepts of Christ as to brotherly kindness, uprightness of daily life, forgiveness of injuries, and love of the practical kind, such as the great Apostle wrote of so reverently and so beautifully in his letter to the Corinthians.

When the Protestant Reformation came the leaders in the movement gave their attention almost entirely to the church's sins of commission. That was the need of the hour. To-day the situation is very different. The hurt that the modern age feels is what the church is not doing. The church is the trustee of a treasure that belongs to the world, and it is not dis-

charging its trust. The first great need of the church is for postitive righteousness. For centuries it has set forth a religion whose chief merit is the skill with which it can run away. Its standard type of virtue, that it teaches to the Christian at all times and in all circumstances, is negative; what he is not to do. The chief and indeed in most instances the sole reward that the church has been promising to the sinner is the absence of punishment. The things in his religion that the Christian himself is encouraged to rejoice over run pretty exclusively along the line of the commandments that he has not transgressed in the service of his father these many years, and the merry-makings with his friends that he has not been permitted to have.

When Our Lord summed up the Commandments he not only put the ten into two, to love God supremely and our neighbor as ourselves, but he did a far greater thing in changing obligation from the negative to the positive form. There are certain things, of course, that should not be done. Christianity recognizes and acknowledges them. But the emphasis is

put upon the virtues that build up more than upon those that take shelter, upon the doing of what the world needs to have done as well as keeping unspotted from its contaminations.

Church history has been to so great an extent a sorrowful record of blunders and contentions and evasions of duty that we need to exercise care in going over it lest we fail to appreciate its large majority of good points. We should always keep an open place in our minds for the evidence of a mysterious and mighty power that even in the darkest periods produced characters of conspicuous purity and saintliness. That power is the one unique and indispensable endowment of Christianity. Other religions have had their conceptions of Deity, ruling in righteousness, loving mercy, rewarding the good, and restraining the evil. Other religions have had saintly teachers, not comparable to Jesus, of course, but men of vision, at whose feet any one could sit with spiritual profit. But no other faith than ours ever had a Holy Spirit.

The previous chapter brought us down to the end of the post-Reformation period, something

less than a century ago. The dawn of the modern age can be fixed at the time when Christians abandoned at last the ancient and medieval practice of punishing heresy by secular power, or in other words ceased to kill one another for the love of God. Though the modern period is less than a century long, we must remember what kind of a century it has been. Measured in events and in growth of ideas rather than by years, a large part of church history has been made within the compass of two or three lifetimes. Some of the changes that have come are quite radical. Our present ideas of Bible interpretation, and our grouping of Christian truths and duties in the order of their relative importance, are entirely new. But the results that we obtain from our modern interpretations differ very slightly after all from the historic theologies, and the old Christian truths and duties are always the same, whether we put the emphasis here or there. Modernism shows no tendency at all to wave the red flag. No type of religious development that has appeared in four thou-

sand years is more anxious to preserve everything in the past that is of real value.

Other changes have come in this modern period that do not deal with Christian doctrines but with methods of doing Christian work. As a rule these alterations in polity have been much more pronounced and radical than any changes in theology, and many people are confused because they do not distinguish between them. We shall consider the modern problems of the church, therefore, under the two heads: questions of the faith and questions of method.

Among the positive changes in the Christian faith we place at the beginning the modern idea of freedom in the church. We do not think of ecclesiastical authority to-day as our fathers did a century ago. We hold firmly to the conviction that the church was not organized and constituted to constrain the convictions of its membership in matters of speculative opinion. In theology the church is a certified teacher, but like any other teacher, when the pupil outruns his instructor the

church has no authority to pull him back. The church has but one bond of union in its membership, and that is loyalty to Christ; which is a matter of spiritual conviction, and not of philosophy. The idea that has been held for centuries, that if one's theological opinion is not the same as that of the majority he is not loyal to Christ, is a foolish and malicious perversion of truth. Time has demonstrated abundantly and convincingly that human minds are never going to run in the same theological channels. We can be loyal only to the Christ in whom we actually believe. How we are to understand his words is a matter of education, and education always and everywhere means growth and change. But whether or not we love and determine to serve the Christ in whom we believe is a matter that is fixed. It can change only by ceasing to exist. And that alone is the bond that binds Christians together in his church. Certified theology is necessarily the opinion not of the wisest but of the majority. And this is only another way of saying it is the opinion of mediocrity. Every thinker

whose opinion differs from that of the majority is not a genius by any means, but whether he is a genius or a fool, the independent thinker has rights, guaranteed long ago by his Master, and the church cannot take them away. No real Christian church can put a man out of its membership for thinking. It can excommunicate only for sinning.

Only one inventor in a thousand is a genius. But when he comes he puts the whole world in his debt. Only one investigator in a thousand who breaks away from the established science of his time proves to be a success. But science never lays a straw in the way of the whole thousand, utter fools though half of them always prove to be. For the one who does find the new truth makes the world rich. Modern religion is coming into this natural and reasonable way of treating all who work that inexhaustible mine of treasure, Holy Scripture. New light is still to break upon it. To insist that men shall study it only in the mental shackles bound upon them by their own petty one per cent of Christendom is the height of

childish absurdity. And yet that is the way the church has been doing for centuries. Is it any wonder that it has "problems"?

Our forefathers revolted from the papal rule. They stood together on this one issue in sufficient numbers to make their movement historic. It was something like the overthrow of slavery in the United States of America. On a certain date there were here so many millions of slaves. An hour later there was not one. So men and churches withdrew from Rome. The separation was immediate and complete. They had been papists. They were papists no longer.

Many a dusky fellow-citizen in America, however, soon found that slavery even worse than the legal kind could be forced upon him because of his inability to join effectively with other freedmen. Protestants have found millions of times in the past four centuries that religious freedom, of the kind they had, was only a change of masters. One of the early translators of Scripture declared that he would make English plowboys to know the word of God better than the Pope of Rome. His success

was so unexpectedly complete that a large part of English-speaking Christendom has been living by plowboy theologies ever since. The papacy of the ignorant proletariat may be quite as arbitrary as that of the Vatican. It speaks in modern days not from the Chair of Peter but in the language of secret conclaves, packed assemblies and mob rule. A century ago if one experienced a change of theological opinion he was expected to change denominations. Such a change brings no relief to-day. Bigotry pays no attention to sectarian lines. The fences are down, and the fight is all over the field. The wood devours more than the sword. When the modern defender of the faith stands on the sectarian battle-line he must wear his armor behind. In the good old days the bigot took his orders from denominational headquarters. Now he takes them from some organization that has withdrawn from all church fellowship, and like a hollow square of soldiers in a day of disaster, is making a last desperate attempt to save the fundamentals of the faith.

Sectarianism, by its method of organization, makes it possible for this same kind of limited

intelligence to exert an abnormal influence in keeping theology within rigid historic lines. It appeals to the literal wording of the creeds in such an effective way that the narrowest-minded saint in the prayer-meeting is able to dictate the terms of orthodoxy to whole churches of intelligent people. Against this condition there is a wide-spread revolt, but for lack of organization practically nothing has been accomplished in the way of relief.

The second of these distinctly modern features of religion is the gradual shift to the scientific, in place of the traditional, attitude of mind in the study of theological problems. This is not the same thing as the so-called conflict between science and religion, which comes under another head entirely. What we are considering here is methods of research, and has nothing to do with the results to which research may lead. Differing ages of the world have had different ways of understanding Scripture and of thinking about God and about religion. The fact that we have the same God that the Hebrews had four thousand years ago does not force us to conceive of his ways and of our duty

to him in the exact terms of their religious philosophy. Ideas of inspiration that make us interpret the Bible in this absurd way must be abandoned.

We live in an age of scientific research and discovery. Unconsciously our habits of thought on all other subjects besides natural science are dominated by this fact. We rest secure in the belief that we are in a universe which does not run by chance or whim or impulse. Every study that we engage in accentuates the conviction that the world on which we live is in the control of an intelligent power, who administers its affairs according to settled and reasonable principles that we call laws of nature. Modern thought is restive under the traditional idea of a Deity who works by unexplainable impulse and does startling things merely to show that he can. This is very different indeed from belief in a universe that has been set going by blind and irresponsible forces, and runs in a groove from which no power at all is great enough to set it free. Modern religious thought is as far from the idea of a world with-

out God as it is from the conception of ancient theological fairy-land, that pictures an arbitrary God moving his world by impulse as a child plays with a mechanical toy.

When the army of Philip II of Spain won a great victory over the French on St. Lawrence's Day, that addle-pated monarch conceived the plan of building an immense palace in the shape of a gridiron, to commemorate the battle and the fact that the martyrdom of St. Lawrence was by roasting on a gridiron. The king spent treasure by the millions building a gigantic structure that he did not need, in a place where no successor of his has ever been able to use it, that stands to-day as empty as the royal head that designed it. In the days of the Spanish Armada people were not easily surprised by such an act on the part of a king. He had the authority, and he used it. They had no trouble in thinking of God in the same terms. He also could do whatever came into his mind, no matter how absurd it might be. Unquestionably the Old Testament writers had such ideas of God, and these ideas determined the style, at least, of their nar-

ratives. We of the present day do not question the power of God, nor his authority, nor his right to do exactly as he pleases in all circumstances. But we have lost the power to think of an infinite God who can do a foolish or unexplainable thing in any circumstances. To us he is not only omnipotent but all-wise and perfectly reasonable. When it is said that he destroyed a world because the people he had made did not exactly suit him, or stopped the building of a tower for fear it might be a stairway into heaven for the wicked, we do not question the narrator's effort to tell something that actually happened, even while we decline to follow the said narrator into all the minutiæ of his suggested reasons for the act. It is a part of the modern progressive attitude toward revealed religion.

There are times and circumstances when we can conceive the best of reasons for miraculous events. Modern Christianity is a long way indeed from the deistic position that a miracle never can happen. But we are equally far from the other extreme, that miracles must be happening all the time or else there is no God

in the world. In the record of miracles in Scripture our thought is usually fixed upon the people rather than upon the assumed suspension or violation of some natural law. And we often find ourselves almost unconsciously following the trend of our time into the inquiry whether in this or that instance exactly the same effect would not have been produced by a supposed miracle as by a real one, particularly in view of what has come nowadays to be almost a science by itself, the traceable effect of mental suggestions in the treatment of disease. And we object to the position sometimes taken that such a view of miracle charges Christ and the Apostles with conscious deception. Certainly no one should be accused of agnosticism or irreverence for insisting that the modern brain can work best in the harness to which it is accustomed.

The third of the changes that we are considering deals directly with the interpretation of Scripture. A common view of the Bible almost universal a century or two ago, and still held by many people, regards it as a literary fetish, given and recorded by miracle

in every detail, to be implicitly received in word and letter even in the most imperfect copy and translation; every statement in it, whether dealing with religion or not, to be considered as absolutely inerrant, and of equal authority with all the rest. No such idea of Scripture can be found in the times that produced it, nor in any other time until after the Reformation. The idea belongs in the same class with other dogmatic assertions made about the same time concerning certain claims of natural science. When Galileo announced that his telescope showed dark, irregular spots on the sun, he was ridiculed even by many of his fellow-scientists. The spots must be on his lenses, for God made the sun and it is perfect. Did he not when his created universe was at last completed say that it all was very good? And when Kepler demonstrated the ellipticity of the planetary orbits, he was met by the same kind of reasoning. Heavenly bodies that a perfect God had made must move in the only perfect geometric figure, the circle. And, of course, if the mere works of his hands must be perfect, how can we imagine any imperfections at all

in his own inspired Word? It must be inerrant.

It is a rather thankless task, even yet, to point out the large number of proved errors and actual contradictions in Holy Writ. Whatever the original manuscripts may have been, they are hopelessly gone centuries ago. We have not a fragment of Bible that comes nearer than about three hundred years from the original writing. No translation of the Bible or of any part of it has ever been made without showing the usual uncertainties that come from the transfer of thought from one language to another. That the contents of Scripture are unique and stand out in a wonderful manner, superior to any and all other literature, is freely acknowledged by all scholarship that is worthy of the name. That these writings have been preserved and handed down century after century with extraordinary care, is a proved fact of history. With these causes of confidence we must be content. Everything beyond them is conjecture.

Moreover, even if such a perfect original Bible ever existed and could be restored, it

would be of interest and value only to the expert. There are many things in this wicked world that keep men away from Christ. In no instance has an imperfect copy of Scripture been known to do so. If the goal of Christian scholarship could be reached to-morrow, and there should go forth from the press millions of Bibles absolutely faultless in record, translation and proved fidelity to the lost autographic manuscripts, there is not the slightest reason to hope that a single human soul anywhere would be led to the light by such a Bible who would not have found it exactly as well and as soon by the use of the Bible that we have. That is not where the trouble lies in modern evangelization. And no fragment of remedy, for the troubles that Christianity actually has, can come along that line.

It is difficult to state in adequate detail the modern view of the Bible in a single paragraph. It is considered to be the authentic record of the best religious thought of the human race at the various times covered by that record. It bears every natural mark of having been most carefully prepared and faithfully trans-

mitted down the centuries to us. Its setting is Oriental. Its conceptions of the world of nature are those commonly held at the time when the different books were written. Its moral and religious teachings are progressive. They show improvement, century after century. This progress, however, was not entirely by the natural law of religious evolution but was much more rapid. What thoughtful men could learn of religion by experience and conference with one another was supplemented in the case of the Hebrews by direct divine communications given to the choice men of the race. The record of these communications is poetic and partakes of the usual extravagances of ancient legend. The marvel of it all is the ever old and ever new story of spiritual achievement, wrought by men of like passions and frailties with us, who, without pretense of perfection, followed consistently the best light that they had. And the crown of it all is Christ, the Shepherd of souls, the Author and Finisher of the one perfect and final faith for mankind.

The world of those who wrote the Bible did have a butter-dish lid over it for a sky, with

lanterns of various sizes hung on the under side. Men could believe in God and be led of God and still believe in such a world. It answered their purpose, and seems to have treated them, on the whole, much as our world treats us. When they went out of the world they passed through that sky to the Eden lying beyond. Their heaven had some advantage over ours, in that it was more easily grasped by the childish intelligence. Into it certain disciples confidently believed they saw their Master go. If their conception of the universe had been the same as ours, what they saw would have been differently interpreted by themselves, necessarily. But, believing as they did, for them to try to tell their experience in terms that would fit our universe is a conception as absurd as the idea of a literally and minutely inspired Bible.

The mother of those people was made of a man's rib, poor unfortunate, and their women suffered for it, clear down to the days of St. Paul. Our mother grew up along with man, and a long way ahead of him in intelligence and such scant virtues as the time demanded. The

idea is admittedly less poetic, but when we consider the results the modern man has no cause of complaint. They were led, in wilderness days, by a pillar of cloud, or smoke, and of fire. If Moses was as wise as we think he was, it is easy to explain that phenomenon by natural laws. But the great fact behind the story, of divine leadership by raising up such a man, will never lose its attractiveness and its power by dropping a miracle out of the narrative. Their prophets came and told them of things that were going to happen. Ours can do the same, for the great moral laws that control peoples and governments, laws that the prophets constantly appealed to, are as fixed and as unchangeable as the laws of the lightning and the rain.

Another change from post-Reformation to modern religious thought is less distinct than these that we have considered, in that it is not a change of conviction at all but only of the way in which the conviction comes. Men of the Nicene Age, the Renaissance, and the Reformation believed in an all-sufficient Saviour, whose ability to avert for them the evils that they so

greatly feared came from his mysterious incarnation, from the atonement that he wrought, and from the fact that he bore our sins and the weight of divine wrath against us because of our sins, in his own person. They believed in a divine Saviour who brought a mysterious grace and power to mankind through strict obedience to an arbitrary world program for the salvation of the elect. Modern Christianity has no quarrel with this kind of philosophy, if it is to be considered purely as a philosophy and not as an interpretation. We think of the same Saviour, the same kind of Saviour, producing the same result exactly. But we think of the greatness of his power as coming from the perfect harmony of his will with the will of God. How he obtained that harmony, whether from some mystic gift of being or by treading in perfection the same road that we imperfectly tread toward our own few and scattered virtues, is a question that modern religion hardly feels itself competent to decide. We only know that his type of virtue could not satisfy him unless he could find a way to share its benefits with us. It is vicarious not so much by ar-

bitrary divine decree as in the nature of the case. Christ, being what he was, necessarily had that kind of love toward all mankind.

In the Christ of the Gospels there is every possible evidence of a constant and an unbroken consciousness of communion with the Father. It is sufficient to account for everything that he did and for everything that he was. We can find not the slightest evidence of any discrepancy between his speech and his thought, between what he actually was and what he always showed himself to be. This alone would make reasonable every hope that humanity has so extravagantly built upon him for nineteen hundred years. His sincerity was so absolute and so plain that it filled his disciples with awe. It fills us with awe to-day, and with a consciousness that in him we have access to the Father, as complete and as satisfying as anything that ever came in the rapt experiences of medieval saints. What St. Paul saw on the highway to Damascus was the vision of an Oriental in the first century. The Christ whom we find in Scripture is of the twentieth century.

But our vision of him is quite as wonderful in its equally marvelous and equally transforming effect.

The present age has all the perplexities that real Bible study has felt for centuries in the efforts to reconcile the diverse and contradictory statements referring to the birth of Christ as a descendant of David, and of a virgin mother whose husband's descent, but not her own, is elaborately traced. This is a question to be decided, if it ever is decided, by careful and painstaking research, and not by ignorant vituperation. Questions of the conflicting phenomena reported in the several accounts of his resurrection on the third day are of a similar character. Beyond their joyful recognition of him, everything that those disciples try to tell us only increases our confusion. We grope in equal perplexity with the Nicene bishops in our efforts to visualize the words of the fourth Gospel and of Paul as to the previous condition of him who counted it not robbery to be equal with God. The one clear conception of the Christ that modern faith holds

with all the pristine freshness of Pentecostal experience is the mystery and the charm of a perfectly ordered life.

The fifth of these changed conceptions, and the last one we shall consider, refers to the life hereafter. So little is said upon this subject in modern preaching, as compared with the conjectural and confusing voluminousness of what used to be said, that many people fear lest religion is losing its belief in a future world. Nothing can be farther from the truth. It is the survival of old views rather than the teaching of new concepts that caused the perfunctory and superstitious childishness that so many army chaplains tell us they found in place of religion among the young men under their charge, and that made them, when face to face with death, look over into the future with such a sense of unreality. The emphasis today is put upon the deathless quality of all that is best and sweetest in life itself, rather than upon the mere endlessness of existence hereafter. It is a revival of interest in the teachings of the fourth Gospel. Eternal life is not

the mere transfer of being. It is to know God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent.

These five points we have called changes in the faith, in the sense that they affect our conceptions of religion itself. We turn our attention in closing this discussion to certain problems of a different kind. They are changes not in ideas of religion, but in convictions as to how any religion ought to be taught and propagated. One of the acknowledged and unquestioned evils bequeathed to us by the immediate past stands out conspicuously above all the others. It is the divided condition of Protestant Christianity. Tragic events of recent date have brought this problem to the front, even among those who have hitherto regarded the divided state as one of the inevitable features of real religious liberty. Not without reason, a very wide-spread impression exists that in the year 1914 Christianity met its supreme test in all the centuries, and failed. Nobody questions what the cause of the failure was. War means concentrated opinion as well as effort, and cannot be dealt with by pygmy

convictions of individual rights. Whatever differences of opinion exist as to just where each element of the blame should be placed, nobody can question that this war, above all others, showed its character from the beginning so very plainly that Christianity was bound to speak out against it. And the church said never a word. Catholic fought with Catholic, Protestant with Protestant; and one side, both Catholic and Protestant, drew in the Mohammedan to fight against Christian brethren on the other side. The pitiful threadbareness of any claim that religious divisions rest upon convictions so precious as not to be touched was never more plainly shown in the whole history of sectarianism.

It was not that the church tried to do something and failed. She did not even try. It was not that religion exhausted itself in talk without action. It did not even talk. And yet Christian people everywhere recognized the gravity of the crisis. The Interchurch World Movement, the wildest scheme of union ever hatched outside of a madhouse, was eagerly welcomed and liberally sustained right up to

the day of its inevitable collapse. People want union. The world will never be made Christian until they demand united effort of some practical kind and get it.

It was providential that Protestantism left a divided church. Mankind was not ready at that time to exercise real religious freedom with safety. To give to the Protestant church of the sixteenth century the power to perpetuate in a united and effective way such religious convictions as then prevailed would have been a disaster. Religious liberty has had to come by the hard law of nature, the elimination of the unfit. But at last it is here. The Reformation broke up the existing Christian unity by breaking away from the superstitions upon which that unity was founded, and thereby prepared the way for a Christian unity without superstition which is yet to come. Moses, for the hardness of the people's hearts, suffered them to put away their wives, with a few humane restrictions. It was the best that could be done until a people more fit for permanent marriage could be developed. God permitted his people to separate in a time when separation was bet-

ter than constant turmoil. But the condition certainly was not intended to be permanent. When the people can be trusted to carry out his permanent plan, there can be no doubt that the way will be opened.

We may consider as the second changed conviction, in regard to methods of propagating Christianity, a restiveness, almost equal to that which is felt over a divided Christendom, on the subject of religious education. One of the first tasks undertaken by American Christianity was the founding of colleges. Our fathers were poor in this world's goods, and few of them had obtained a liberal education. But they insisted upon providing liberally for an educated ministry. That is what our great institutions of learning down to the time of the Revolution were founded for. The most conspicuous of all the peculiar American developments of Christianity in later years has been the repudiation of its own universities and colleges by the church, and the insistence upon an uneducated, or at least a throttle-educated, ministry among large sections of Protestantism. A condition of widespread suspicion

against liberal education exists among those who claim to be spiritual leaders in our time. The church does not stand at the summit of the intellectual life of the community as it did in colonial days, but at a point so much lower that it looks upon the young people in our colleges as about the most hopeless class to reach with its kind of gospel in the whole community. Even if they were Christians of the conventional type before going to college, they "lose their faith" while there; which means, of course, that they lose certain ideas of religion that were taught them in their home churches. The modern church is confident that it can cope with youthful wickedness, but not with youthful quest for knowledge.

Another aspect of the same condition is the self-complacency with which so much of our conventional church life regards its type of Sunday-school instruction; a system of training unlike anything else in the world, heathen or Christian, that ever was devised. There is a famous Mohammedan school where nothing is taught but the Koran. The curriculum is reduced to a mathematical line, without breadth

or thickness. But it must be said of these young bigots that they do learn the Koran. They can pass an exhaustive examination on the Mohammedan book when they are through. Our children learn nothing that can give them any help in meeting the inevitable religious inquiries of the time in which they live.

In secular educaton, which in most of the States of the Union is carefully separated from religion, our children have every advantage. They have modern and well-equipped schools. Their teachers must be specially trained. There is the enthusiasm of numbers, the stimulus of ambition to excel, the encouragement that comes from the community's interest in them, and the consciousness of attainment as they pass from one grade to another. Our school system cannot be called perfect, but it is consistent. It is built upon the wholesome American idea of doing practical things in an effective way.

On Sundays these same children are separated from most of their companions by a prejudice of which they have some vague and startling notions but no real information. We

have inherited a sectarianism of which we are so heartily ashamed that we hesitate to discuss it with our children. They are gathered into ill-adapted quarters and by way of instruction are talked to for half an hour by well-meaning amateurs who could not pass a child's examination upon the subjects they are supposed to teach. The author is not here drawing upon information at second hand. A large part of his own life-work has been directly along these lines, in church connections that insured as high-grade intelligence in teachers and as liberal support financially as can be found in America. He asserts without fear of successful contradiction that more than nine out of ten children of intelligent Protestant Americans are not religiously educated at all. Whatever ideas on the subject they actually get, they pick up among themselves.

Some of these children go to college and lose their faith. What had they to lose? Others remain at home and keep their faith. Where do they keep it? Is it a matter to be wondered at that here in America, among people of social position and of some pretensions to in-

telligence, there is the finest recruiting-ground for fool religions and nag-ridden schemes of healing that the whole world can show?

A large part of the success of religion a century or more ago must be attributed to the fact that it was stimulated and shored up by public interest and by many pious customs that have fallen into utter decay. Children were taken to church regularly and conscientiously by their parents. There was no other way to respectability, and usually nowhere else to go. Conditions are very different to-day. No sign of the time is more significant and ominous than this, that religion, real religion itself, must be made so interesting that people of all ages will come to church for the sake of religion and nothing else. Practically everything else has been tried in the modern church and has dismally failed.

A small but significant part of the educational program bears upon the preparation of young men for the Christian ministry. We have hundreds of theological schools in America, founded expressly to propagate partial and controversial types of doctrine.

They are known by sectarian names, supported by sectarian funds, and the dead hand of the past is upon them. Those who teach in them are subjected to denominational tests somewhat after the order of thumb-screws and hot plowshares, and in a few of the minor kinds, so deadly is the spiritual atmosphere of the time, the instructors are required to resubscribe to the doctrinal standards at least once a year. In some instances this policy has succeeded. No one could ask a more microscopic and key-hole-searching type of theological instruction than some of these schools of the prophets can show. But it was written long ago that the entrance of God's word giveth light. It is an exceedingly difficult thing to make the Bible teach foolishness in an investigating age. It has come to be that the least encumbered type of religious thinking in the modern world is found usually in theological seminaries. They are built upon a scheme of doctrinal bigotry so palpably and utterly absurd that it has defeated its own end. We tremble to think what is going to happen when some people in our churches discover the fact that a real Bible is taught in

a real way in so many of our theological schools.

The third among the evidences of a changed opinion in modern days has reference to the program of evangelization. No living church can be bound down to any one type of propaganda. Provision must be made in an age like ours to reach not only the people of widely divergent natural tastes and degrees of culture, of all grades of education and of experiences in reading and discussing modern problems, but also of every previous condition of religious servitude. The church in future will depend a great deal more upon the proper religious training of the young than upon revivalism of any kind, but it is neither probable nor desirable that special efforts to reach the unchurched people in a land like ours will be diminished but rather greatly increased in any advance movement that may be inaugurated. The inexcusable extravagances of this kind of work in the past have created a most unfortunate prejudice against special efforts of the kind that may be called genuine religious awakenings. Modern communities need to be shaken out of their apathy by any reasonable

efforts and methods that can help in turning the thoughts of this careless and materialistic generation to the eternal realities of life. But we must frankly recognize the fact that among all the manifestations of religion that this unfortunate age of ours has had to endure, the revivalism of the past century or so has been the very worst. The vulgarity that Christian people have been willing to submit to in this kind of work has had a great deal to do with the unfavorable attitude of this age toward religion. Coarseness and indecency have no place in the preaching of the gospel.

Fortune and fame await the colleges, schools and publishing-houses that work out practical and timely courses of instruction for Sunday-school teachers, choristers and managers. Christianity in these days is only seeking to do what the Apostles did in their day, and the Reformers in theirs: it is trying to make inherited religious convictions square with the facts of life as our generation understands them. We are not attempting to change the Christian faith in any way whatsoever, but we do want to substitute developed judgments of

it for outworn opinions. With all the emphasis that the present conditions call for upon educational means and methods, we must never forget that in all ages of history no great religious advance has ever come by increased clarity in understanding religion apart from the most intimate and vital union with emotional and moral forces. Emotion without intellect does produce a certain kind of religion, but intellect without emotion produces nothing. The wholesome union of the two is our practical goal. It is as necessary as the union of love and righteousness, of faith and works. Only in such a way can we propagate a religion that measures up to the need of our time.

We never should have had a fourth Gospel, with its fathomless mines of spiritual treasure, if the author of it had not possessed the courage to break away from the over-emotional and under-intellectual type of religion that shows so clearly in the earlier chapters of the Book of the Acts and elsewhere in the New Testament. Nothing that ever was written is more genuinely and thoroughly spiritual than the first Epistle of John. It is the perfect type

of emotionalism, held under absolute mental control. It speaks of a love that has power to gain the world and to hold the world, but has nothing in common with extravagance or fanaticism. It is the body, the soul, and the spirit of religion, each in full and well-balanced accord with the other. The appeal that the expectant church is becoming ready to make to the modern world is like the very City of God itself. The length, the breadth, and the height of it are equal.

There is a vast difference between living in the thrill of a genuine religious awakening and trying to reproduce the effects of it when the fires have burned out. The Christian faith of the present hour is neither dead nor dying. It has possessions—material, intellectual and spiritual—such as the faith has never had before in any age of the world, even that of the Apostles. What the church is longing for today is one of those mighty movements of the Spirit of God, coming no man can tell when or how, but which no man can mistake when it does come, that will take the things of Christ and show them to us with new and wonderful power.

We cannot obtain this power by looking at the past or by copying the methods of the past. The Holy Spirit is creative and not imitative, even of his own past victories. We should take what the past has taught us, of course, and should use it. We should hold fast that which is good. But we should be ready also, with eager willingness, to be led into whatsoever of new and greater good God may have in store for us in the days of the widest opportunity the church of Christ has ever known, the time that lies immediately before us.

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